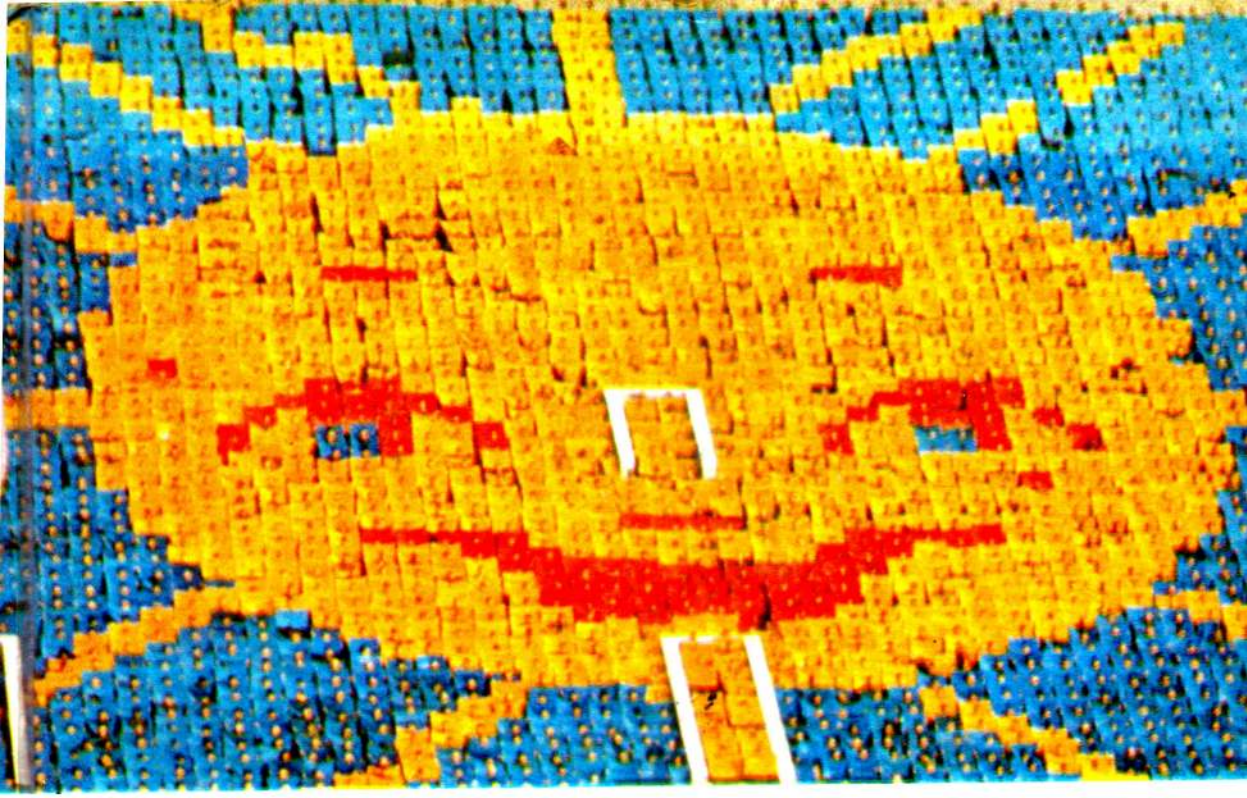

Children and Sport in the USSR

M. Kondratyeva
V. Taborko

PROGRESS PUBLISHERS
MOSCOW

"We want to see our youth well educated, spiritually rich and also sound, healthy and strong."

L. I. BREZHNEV,

General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR

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Дети и спорт в СССР

На английском языке

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Foreword

The Soviet Union is one of the leading sports powers in the world. It is quite impossible to imagine life in the Soviet Union without sport, as health care is an inalienable feature of the Soviet way of life.

In the sixty-plus years of its existence the Soviet state has made tremendous progress in building up its economy and agriculture, in developing science, education and culture.

To quote Comrade Brezhnev, "the growing social equality of Soviet society is the common denominator of all the changes in its life. The indivisible union of the working class, the collective farm peasantry and the people's intelligentsia has become stronger than ever.

"The differences between the main social groups are gradually being eroded. The actual course of their lives is bringing all the nations and nationalities of our country closer together. A new historical community – the Soviet people – has formed."

The new Soviet Constitution, which condenses the results of the USSR's development, vividly demonstrates to the entire world the essence of socialist democracy, the enormous scope of the participation of all Soviet people in the administration of the state, and the extent and variety of their rights and freedoms. It is convincing proof that the ideas of the October Revolution and the behests of Lenin are being successfully put into effect.

In the mature socialist society created in the Soviet Union the Constitution guarantees each citizen the right to work and to rest, to health care and education, the right to participate in the state administration and freedom of conscience, rights to living accommodation and to material welfare in old age or in case of illness.

Article 25 of the New Constitution reads:

"In the USSR there is a uniform system of public education, which is being constantly improved, that provides general education and vocational training for citizens, serves the communist education and intellectual and physical development of the youth, and trains them for work and social activity."

Article 41of the new Constitution makes legislative provisions for the development of sports and tourism in the USSR. Each Soviet citizen enjoys the right to engage in reasonable and active leisure pastimes, to go in for sports regularly. This right is ensured by the assistance and comprehensive material support provided by the state.

At present more than 50 million people regularly play some form of sport in the Soviet Union.

More than 300,000 highly qualified specialists are working towards implementing the government's plans for the development of sports and physical culture in the USSR, trained at the country's more than 200 institutions of physical education.

Children in the Soviet Union are called the "privileged class", since they enjoy the special wise and loving attention of our society.

The Programme of the CPSU proclaims the admirable aim to ensure that every child has a happy childhood.

The Communist Party and the Soviet government are doing all to ensure that our children grow up healthy and strong, with finely developed minds and bodies.

The Soviet Union boasts the world's first comprehensive and scientifically based system of medical care for every child. Even before a baby is born it is already an object of people's solicitous thoughts, and measures are being taken to ensure that it will grow up healthy. The welfare of mothers-to-be is protected by medical consultations and they are granted paid leave during pregnancy and after childbirth, and provided with qualified medical attention.

More than 10 million children go to kindergartens and crèches. There are in all more than 100,000 pre-school establishments for our children.

The health of Soviet children is attended to by more than 80,000 pediatrists and more than 400,000 hospital places are available for child patients. Our more than 1,200 child sanatoria have a total of more than 200,000 places. Every year more than half a million children attend these sanatoria for purposes of rest and recuperation; they also attend classes here.

Every summer no less than I0-I2 million children and teenagers spend holidays in Pioneer camps in town and country, collective farms and schools. A considerable portion of the public consumption funds in the Soviet Union are allocated for the maintenance and rearing of the growing generation, and to render material aid to large families. This aid is provided in various forms, stipulated by a special law on material aid for large families and those of reduced means.

The loving care of our children has become a moral principle of Soviet society, and one upheld throughout the entire nation. There is perhaps not a single social unit in the Soviet Union which is not concerned by problems of bringing up children, their education and health care.

Practically all Soviet children actively engage in physical education. A broad network of sports clubs, sports schools, and mass sports competitions give every child the possibility to play his favourite sport, to build up his health, growing strong and acquiring sporting skill.

Children's sports sections have been set up at all Young Pioneer Palaces, in all Pioneer camps, in practically all the country's general education schools and also in the majority of stadiums and central sports clubs.

Up to 30 million children now take part in the yearly school spartakiads.

Particular popularity is enjoyed amongst Soviet schoolchildren by the competitions sponsored by the Central Committee of the Young Communist League (YCL): the Leather Ball, Golden Puck, Olympic Snowflake, Neptune, Hopeful Starts and other competitions.

The special feature of these competitions is that every child or teenager can take part in them.

Healthy children mean a healthy society. This is the principle and motto of the massive physical education programme being carried out in the Soviet Union among children.

On many occasions the Soviet Union has demonstrated its desire for peace, mutual understanding and friendship amongst the peoples of the entire world. Any propagation of war is forbidden by law in the Soviet Union. This principle has also been written into the Constitution.

One manifestation of the sincere desire of Soviet people for peace, cooperation and good-neighbourly relations with the peoples of all countries, is Moscow's selection as the host city of the 22nd Olympic Games, a world festival of sport. The holding of the Olympic Games for the first time in a socialist state, in which the Olympic ideas are not only proclaimed but actually put into practice, will undoubtedly mark a new stage in the development of the Olympic movement.

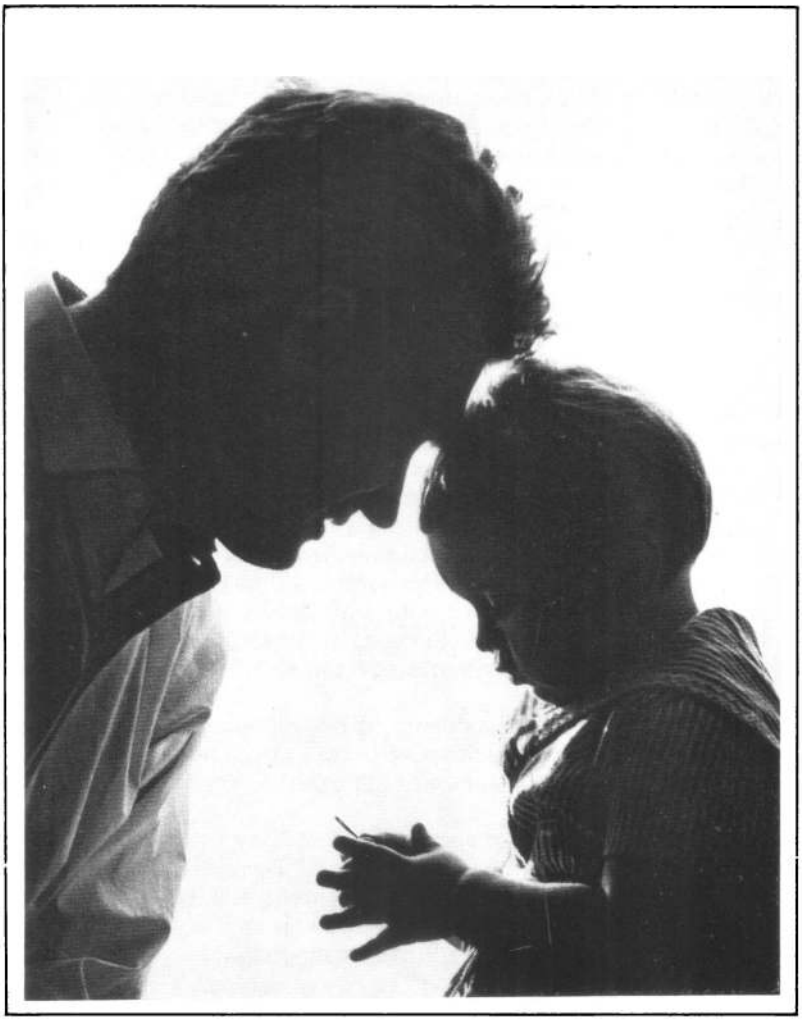
Preparations for Olympiad-80 have given a new impetus to mass sport in the Soviet Union, including that at child level.

Mass sporting events held under the slogan: "The Olympics are not only for Olympians" have acquired enormous popularity. Thousands and thousands of new enthusiasts are being won over to sport, and are doing their utmost to contribute to the Olympic movement, which embodies the noble ideals of peace and friendship.

More than 17 million Soviet children and teenagers have already taken part in the All-Union Hopeful Starts sporting events, held under the slogan: "There are Olympians in our midst!"

The young citizens of the Soviet Union are guaranteed a childhood of fun and happiness. The doors to knowledge, art and sport are all open wide to them. They are the hope of our new society, a society "the like of which", as Comrade Brezhnev emphasised at the 25th Congress of the CPSU, "mankind has never known before".

"It is a society with crisis-free, steadily growing economy, mature socialist relations and genuine freedom.... It is a society of firm confidence in the future, of radiant communist prospects. Before it lie boundless horizons of further all-round progress."



First Steps

The birth of a child is one of life's most beautiful and happiest occasions.
All the more important, therefore, that from its very first moment in this world a baby should start to grow up healthy and strong.
All the necessary conditions for this are provided in the Soviet Union. Maternity care is ensured in the USSR by a state system of special institutions (hospitals, maternity homes, gynaecological consultations etc.), which attend to the health needs of mother and child. All medical care is provided free of charge to the expectant mother.
In the maternity home the newborn child is carefully weighed and measured in the first minutes of its life – these are the first indicators of its physical health. Today's babies far outstrip newborn babies at the beginning of the century in both weight and height. But even such strapping young fellows as those born today need constant close attention – all babies are born into the world entirely helpless. Their main defence against all life's iniquities is physical resilience. One of the simplest means of toughening babies, and the easiest to provide is air-bathing. The baby receives its first air-baths

soon after birth: when it has its nappy or its clothes changed, or is undressed before a bath. Then it is taught its first skills in physical training, perfòrming simple exercises with the help of its mother or a nurse. A medical visitor from the regional child-care unit starts to attend to mother and child literally from the first day they are discharged from the maternity home. She helps the mother look after the newborn child. In addition, each mother has consultations with the doctor appointed to her as to developing the child's fitness and the first steps of its physical education.

A complex of special exercises recommended by doctors has been worked out at the Scientific Research Institute of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences. Incidentally, this course includes essential physical exercises for the mother as well as the child.

In the Child Consulting-Room, to be found in every child-care unit, the mother is instructed how to conduct these exercises. Their basic principles are that they should be conducted gradually and systematically, with the strict observance of hygienic rules. Recommendations of the Scientific Research Institute of Child and Youth Hygiene of the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences contain information on walks in the fresh air, airing and bathing treatment, and the system of strengthening the child's organism.

Developing fitness is an extensive process. To quote G. Speransky, one of the leading Soviet pediatrists, it is inseparable from the child's education as a whole, from the desire to see the child grow into a physically and morally healthy working person.

Fit children are more resistant to colds and other illnesses, endure any difficulty more easily, and cope better with physical and mental loads.

The time comes when the baby stands up and takes his first steps. At this period it is particularly vital to teach him to move properly. This will insure against flatfootedness at a later age, and ensure a good bearing.

Until the age of one or two the child remains at home. At this age many mothers decide to put their children in crèches.

Crèches are organised at all large enterprises and institutions, in all urban districts, in villages, collective and state farms. Practically every Soviet family has the possibility of sending its child to a crèche. The cost is 12 roubles a month, and some children, especially those from large families and those of reduced means, and of single mothers, are taken free of charge.

The crèche is an entire new world for the child. He is not yet capable of doing much for himself, understands little, and what he knows and likes best of all is the warmth of his mother's arms. What in a crèche can take

the place of this? For a start, the warmth and care of the staff, and, most important, the atmosphere of fun. When he plays a child receives a lot of information, acquiring numerous skills and new abilities. No day passes and no step is taken without a child learning something new. The staff at crèches are as a rule people with teachers' qualifications, trained at special colleges of pre-school education.

Activities and games are initially conducted on an individual basis with each child, and then when a little time has passed they are brought together into small groups.

When the child turns 3 he is transferred to a kindergarten.

While the crèche caters for toddlers – from one to three – the kindergarten takes children from three to seven.

At this stage a child learns to take his first independent steps: to make his own bed, put toys back in their place, to tie those unmanageable shoelaces and, finally, to do morning exercises.

Children are divided in the kindergarten by age-groups. The three-year-olds form the youngest group, the four-year-olds the middle group and the older children go into the preparatory group, where they are prepared for their first year at school.

The smooth system of successive educational establishments – crèche, kindergarten, school – helps to raise healthy, happy and active children in this country. It also helps us develop in them a feeling of collectivism and mutual help, a sense of responsibility for their comrades as well as themselves.

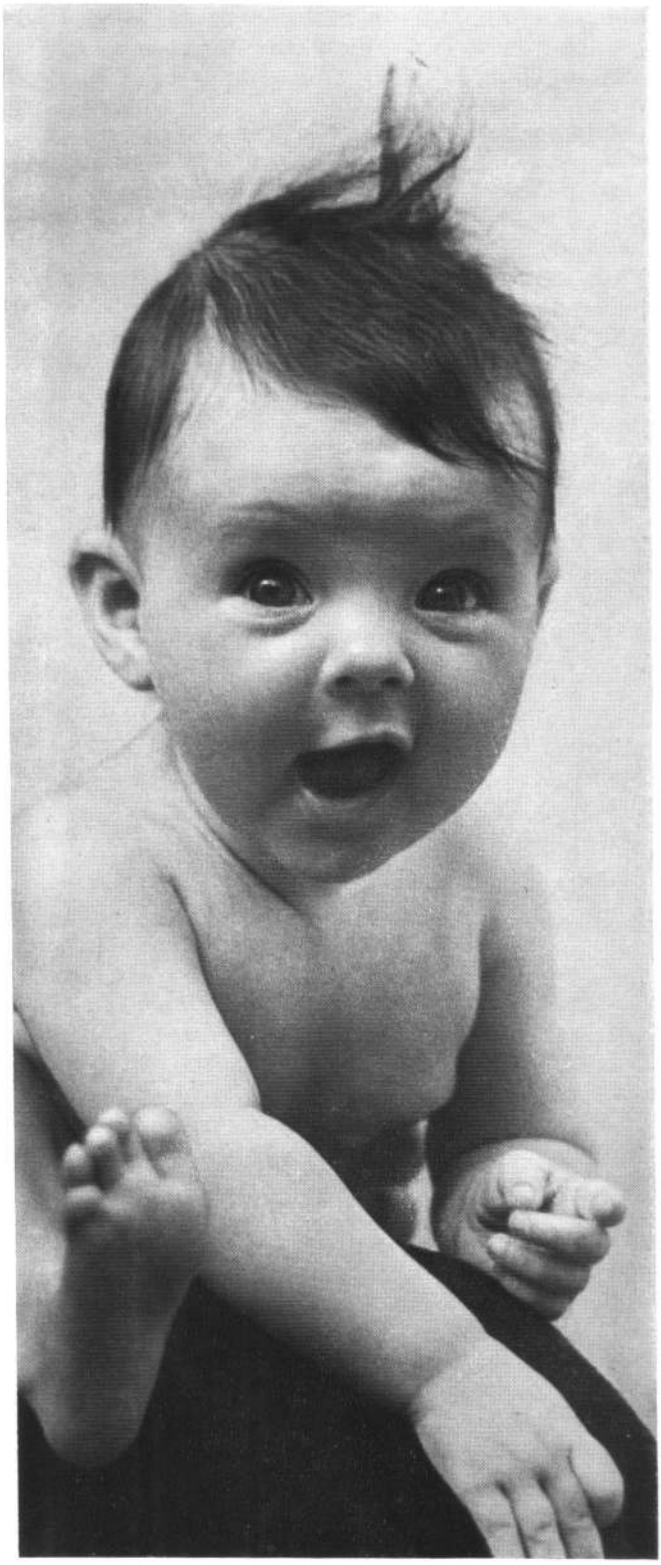
It is of course an entirely voluntary matter for parents to bring their children to crèches or kindergartens. Certain families (statistically insignificant) still prefer to prepare children for school themselves. However they usually have to admit that their children, especially in the first school months, feel shy at school and are less active and adapted to collective activities than their friends who have attended crèches and kindergartens. This is one of the reasons why more and more parents are placing their children in such establishments in the Soviet Union.

The educational programme for kindergartens was worked out by the Scientific Research Institute of Pre-School Education of the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. It is constantly being improved and enriched with the latest achievements of pedagogical and medical science.

This integrated system is successfully operating throughout the Soviet Union.

What exactly is the modern Soviet kindergarten? This is a small "children's town" – cosy, bright and happy. Over the country there are tens of thousands of these little towns. Let us now take a closer look at one of them.

Imagine a large orchard, containing sports fields



covered with brightly-coloured roofs. This territory belongs to 570 children from the Ukrainian town of Vinnitsa, who attend the Beryozka (Birch Tree) kindergarten. Sports festivities are often held here, and they have all the attributes of adult events, with colourful parades, strict judges and excited fans.

Carefully keeping step the children march out onto the sports field to musical accompaniment. Some carry red flags and others white and blue balls. It is a pleasure to watch these youngsters, and we cannot but admire their skill and pluck. The gymnastic display is followed by fun races.

The contesting teams confidently cope with the obstacles: hurdles, stepladders.... It is worth noting that these exercises are performed by all the children without exception.

In the intervals between the events the teachers conduct quizzes:

"When and where were the past Olympics held?"

"In Montreal."

"And where will the next Olympics be held?"

"In the USSR, in Moscow."

The children's up-to-date knowledge and physical fitness is easy to explain: physical culture is one of the main means of educating the children in Beryozka. The kindergarten's experience is demonstrated at the Exhibition of Economic Achievement of the USSR. The records of the Head Committee of the exhibition state: "2nd class diploma awarded to Vinnitsa kindergarten No 23 for their progress in rearing physically fit children and creating conditions which answer all modern pedagogical and aesthetic requirements for the proper development of children."

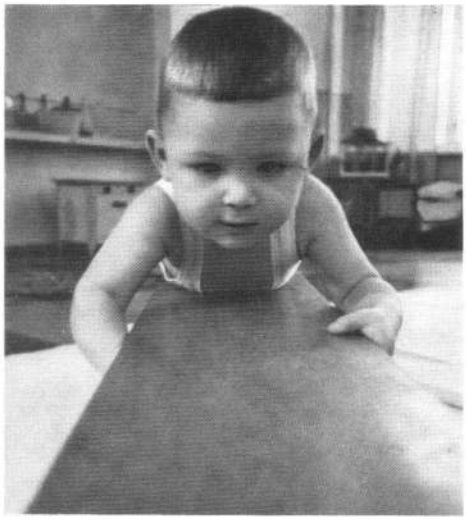
"In recent years we haven't had a single instance of illness at our morning P. T. session," we were told by Anna Ivanovna, the headmistress of Beryozka. Then, with a smile, she added: "And to think that once we used to be told by parents: 'Take care now that the child doesn't catch a chill, and he can do without P.T.'"

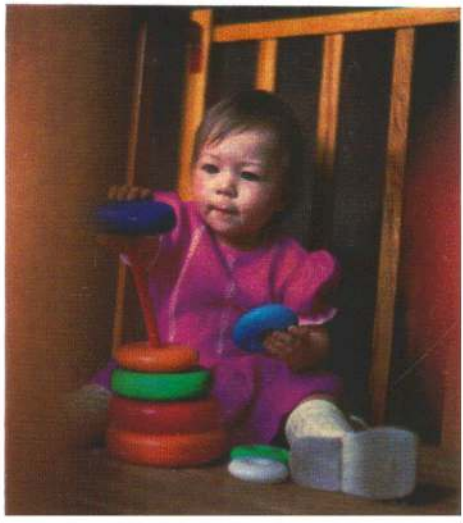
The P.T. session for the three-year-olds, as well as for the other age-groups, is always a game, a source of fun.

There is a special unit in Beryozka for weaker children, but even they actively engage in physical culture, only in their case the sessions are held individually, with special attention being given to each child.

Fresh air is the kindergarten teacher's trusty assistant. The kindergarten has a clearly worked-out system for developing the children's fitness. From his very first days a child is taught not to fear frost, cold water or wet weather. During each day the children spend four or five hours in the open.

The children chase one another round the playgrounds, play badminton, table-tennis, ride bicycles and scooters.





In the winter they go skiing and tobogganning and throw snowballs.

The parents take an active part in the building of the sports centre, equipping it and organising games.

The teacher-parent association is proving extremely fruitful as regards both the children's physical and general education. This is the aim set by all kindergartens.

Every day the children and their teachers set out on walks, during which various games are held – with running, jumping, throwing balls. Sometimes simple competitions are held, with the running of relay-races.

Teachers in kindergartens observe a golden rule: always maintain a cheerful, bright mood in your group. In such an atmosphere it is so much easier for the children to absorb all they hear and see.

The Institute of Pre-School Education has worked out a whole set of different motor games and exercises with a ball, skipping rope, skittles, which can be conducted by parents at home, as well as the teachers in the kindergarten. The Institute can always give consultations on how to organise the child's regime, what place to accord to games, and the teaching of the initial sporting skills. After all, each child's education is an individual matter. But there are certain games and exercises that they regard as essential for all children.

These include above all the morning P.T. session. This session consists of 3 or 4 exercises conducted like a game. They are repeated, but no more than 5-6 minutes are to be spent on the entire session which is followed by airing and bathing. The Institute has worked out various norms for physical exercise for young children. For example, they reckon that at the age of 2 or 3 a child should be able to aim and throw a ball at a target 60-100 cm away, and walk along a beam raised 20 centimetres. At 3-4 he should be able to do a standing long jump of 40-45 cm, jump over simple hurdles and climb up a gymnasium wall.

Many kindergartens have their own sports grounds with basic sports equipment and all sorts of swings and roundabouts.

In many towns there are special children's parks, where groups of children are taken from different kindergartens under the supervision of their teachers and also brought by their parents. Funny contests are held in these parks: kiddicar or tricycle races, relay-races and ball-games. Special organisers run these events. Entrance to children's parks is free.

In villages practically every kindergarten has its own little field for walks and games. The Krasnaya Niva (Red Cornfield) collective farm in the Mai district of the Kabardin-Balkar Autonomous Republic has built its children

a cosy and attractive kindergarten, called the Glow-worm. It is equipped with bright, airy dormitories and gaily decorated playrooms. Alongside the two-storey kindergarten building is a grassy playground.

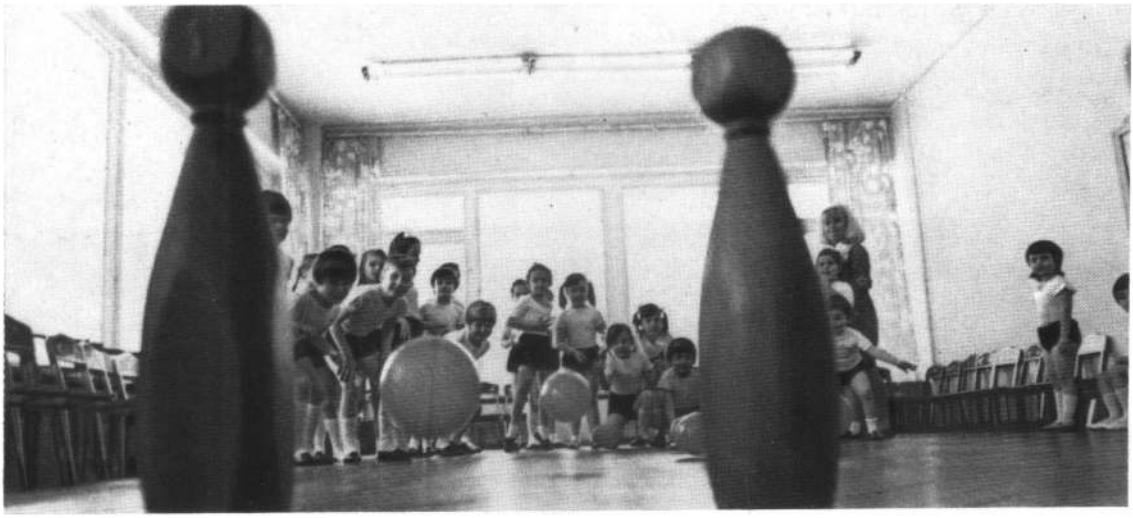
The running costs of the Glow-worm are entirely borne by the collective farm.

Children who live in villages are of course much closer to nature than city children of the same age. That is why the majority of city kindergartens move to country cottages in summer.

These cottages are as a rule situated in pine or larch forests, on the banks of rivers or lakes.

During summer children shoot up in height, and grow strong and tanned.

Some children go away in the summer with their parents, who prefer to spend their holidays *en famille*. There

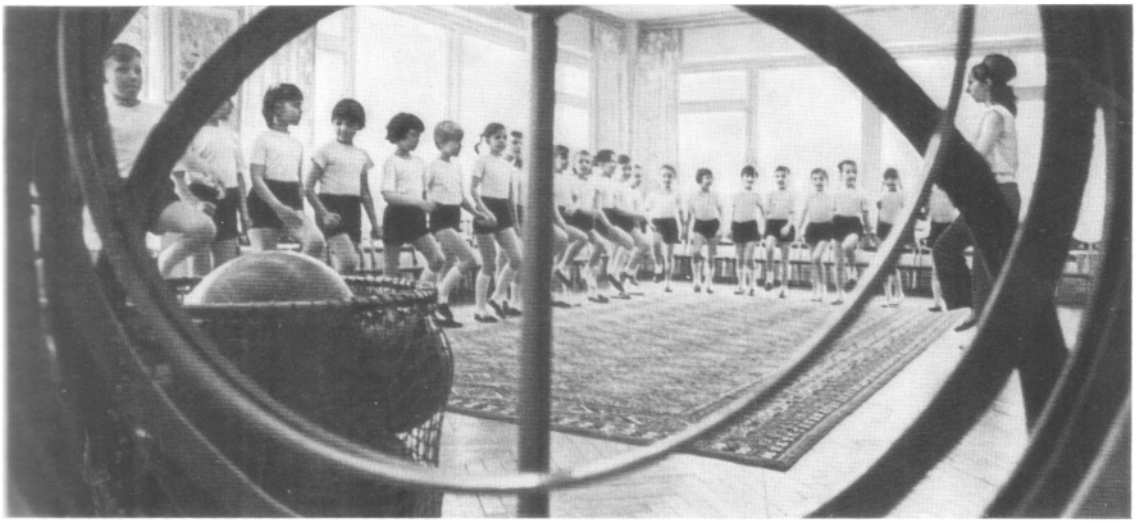


are large numbers of rest homes and sanatoria in the USSR where parents may holiday together with their children. Furthermore, in many picturesque corners of the country – the shores of the Black and Azov seas, the famous resorts of Gelendzhik and Sukhumi, on the Baltic Coast in Dzintari and Kemeri, in the Urals and Altai, in the mountain resort of Borzhomi hotels and sanatoria have been opened which cater specially for the mother and child. One of these, Tsagveri in Georgia, is a marvellous climatic resort, especially for those who suffer from respiratory complaints. Another – in Anapa with its magnificent sandy beaches – is a superb place for bathing.

All the hotels and sanatoria contain comfortable accommodation and relaxation facilities, medical consultation rooms and solaria, cinemas and sports grounds. When the mother is taking curative baths or other treatment prescribed by the doctor the baby is tended by nurses. The sanatoria and hotels employ musicians and

sports instructors, who are in attendance at the sports grounds to conduct the children's activities, and in the evenings the mother, if she wishes, may relax alone – her child being taken care of in special playrooms.

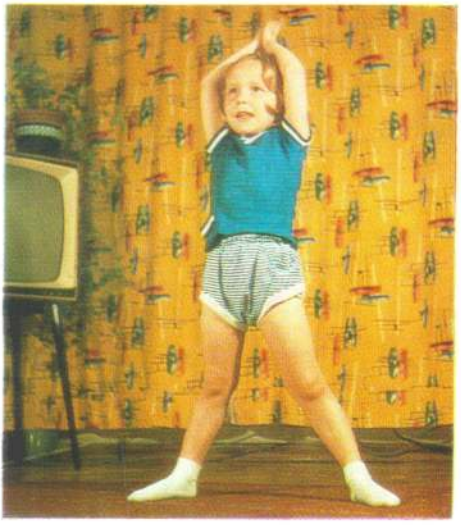
Some parents prefer the fun of a camping trip to stationary holidays: travelling on foot, by bicycle, by canoe along rivers and around lakes. Such holidays are fabulous experiences for children too. What indeed can compare with the exhilaration of pitching tent in a leafy oak grove, making a fire and sitting with your rod by the river, or kicking a ball around the meadows carpeted with lush, emerald-green grass! There are children who make their first journeys in a rucksack on their fathers' backs, and then at an older age, follow in their parents' footsteps along untrodden paths, or go canoeing, sitting in front of their parents like the pilots of miniature ships.

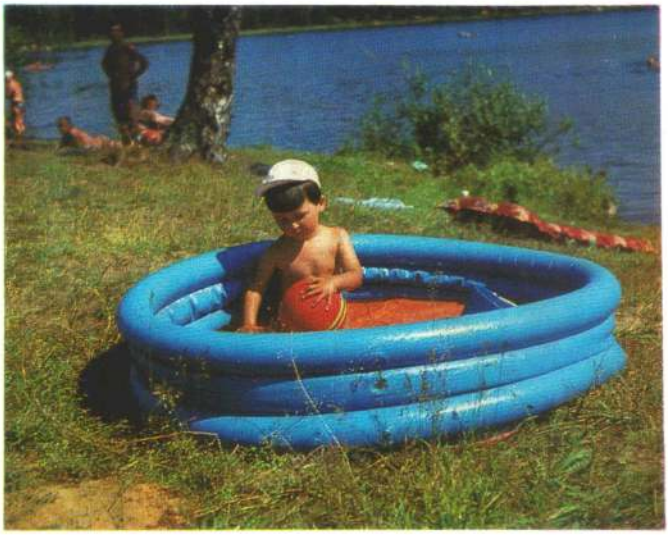


There are many hiking clubs in the Soviet Union where prospective hikers can always receive efficient advice about routes or equipment, and acquire all the camping equipment they need.

The Moscow Council on Tourism and Excursions, for example, organises short one-day hikes every Sunday around the memorial sites of the Moscow environs. All interested, of any age, may join these hikes.

Many families enjoy travelling out of town on so-called health trains. These trains regularly depart from the stations of many major cities – Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Sverdlovsk, Minsk, and others. Departure is at seven or eight a.m. At ten or eleven the train stops at some picturesque spot where the trippers spend the day, relaxing and enjoying the beauty of nature. The train remains at the spot all day, and in case of a storm they can warm up in





the comfortable coaches. A hot dinner is served in their compartments. In the evening the health train returns to the city.

There are similar boat trips, in which the trippers enjoy the comfort of cabins aboard river steamers or passenger liners.

A trip of this sort leaves an unforgettable impression on parents and children alike.

Every year the number of sporting families in the Soviet Union grows owing to the constant attention paid to leisure, sport and tourism by all Party, state, trade-union and public organisations.

Every family, in whatever part of the Soviet Union it lives, has the opportunity to work profitably and enjoy pleasant holidays. And no holiday is complete without sport. That is why sport is playing an increasingly active role in the everyday lives of Soviet people. Many families already live by the motto: "Never a day without physical exercise." Boris and Lena Nikitin and their family are an outstanding example. They are both teachers, and all their children, of which they have seven, are brought up to be extremely fit and used to large physical loads.

The playroom in the Nikitins' modest flat has been equipped as a proper sports hall, with stepladders and inclined beams, a horizontal bar, rings and other gymnastic apparatus and a mat on the floor. On the wall there is a blackboard, which can be written on in coloured chalks to solve puzzles and rebuses. Here you will also find picture blocks and alphabet books. No one makes the children study – they learn from one another.

All day long, whatever the time of year the children run barefoot around the flat, wearing nothing but thin shorts.

The small ventilation panels in the windows are always open and the temperature in the flat is not allowed to go

over 15 °C. The children are allowed to run out into the yard barefoot and undressed, even in winter.

"But that's appalling!" you might exclaim. However, nothing bad happens. The children in this family are growing up strong and healthy, and they do not know what it is to have a cold. They overtake their co-evals not only in their physical, but also their mental development. The eldest son Alexei, born in 1959, finished school ahead of his age, having skipped one year, then worked at the Scientific Research Institute of Instrument-Making as an adjuster of radio-electronic equipment, and then enrolled in the department of computing technology of the institute.

Anton, born in 1960, finished tenth grade of his mathematical school at the age of 14, then graduated with

distinction from a chemical engineering school and was accepted for the chemistry faculty of Moscow State University.

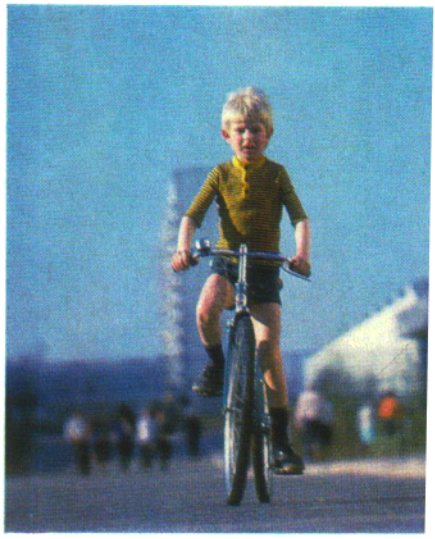
Olga, born in 1962, also finished school ahead of her age and is now studying at a teacher training college.

Anna, born in 1964, finished school at 14 and has enrolled at an institute.

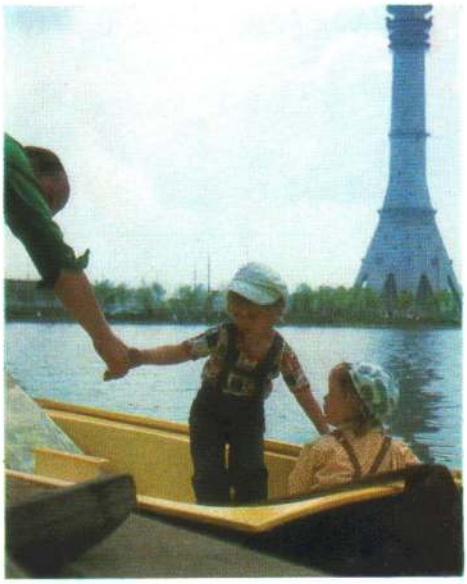
Yulia, born in 1966, was in the 7th class at school at the age of 11.

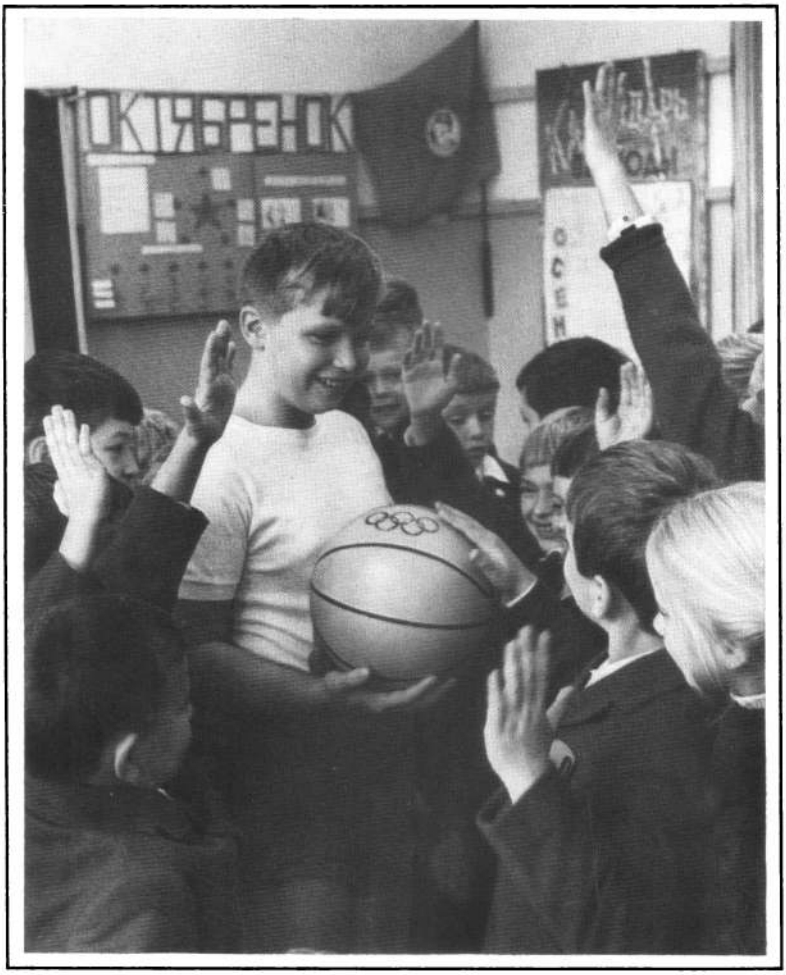
Ivan, born in 1969, is making excellent progress in the 3rd class. But he has already been caught up by his younger sister Lyuba, born in 1971. They now attend the same class at school.

The Nikitin family's experiment has been studied by scientists, teachers and doctors. It has found a lot of adherents amongst young parents and today many families are raising their children by the "Nikitin method".



Imagine what fun it must be for children to grow up in a sporting family. What excitement for them to explore the world on camping trips. There is unlimited scope for such holidays. In every region hikers will find comfort and overnight accommodation at tourist centres and hostels, the number of which is constantly increasing. In the present five-year period the state expenditure on tourist services in the Soviet Union will amount to 5,600 million roubles, an increase of more than 50 per cent over that of the last five-year plan.





Sport in the School

As we have seen, pre-school establishments in the USSR – crèches, kindergartens and summer camps – do a lot to develop children's fitness. Sporting families also play a significant role in this respect. That is why it is not surprising that most Soviet children start school already well-developed physically.

Naturally enough, healthy children have an inherent aptitude for movement. However their excessive liveliness and noisy fun can interfere with the normal running of lessons. Teachers endeavour to instil a sense of strict discipline in children from their very first days in school which means that, whether they like it or not, they restrict children in their movements. Lack of movement leads to hypodynamia, a "fashionable" disease of the modern age among children as well as adults (and one widespread in practically all the developed countries).

In the Soviet Union the campaign against hypodynamia is waged at a national level. On February 2, 1971 the Ministry of Education of the USSR and the State Committee for Physical Culture and Sport adopted a Statute on the Physical Education of Pupils at General Schools, which gave clear and strict regulations

of all questions of physical education of schoolchildren. New, more effective methods emerged, created by the efforts of a number of scientific research and pedagogical centres. In particular, the question of the motor activity of schoolchildren was discussed in detail at a joint session of the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences and the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences held in 1977. More than a hundred academicians and corresponding members took part in this forum.

The collaboration of medics and pedagogues brought good results in the establishment of an optimal health regime for schoolchildren. The joint efforts of experts, teachers and physiologists, hygienists and pediatrists, resulted in the compilation of a new school programme of physical education. It is compulsory in all Soviet schools from the 1st to the 10th class, and is graded for each class. The programme is based on such basic sports as gymnastics and track-and-field, swimming and skiing. And although there is a single curriculum for all the schools of the country, it is adjusted in each republic in accordance with geographical conditions and specific national features. In mountainous areas crosscountry skiing is, of course, replaced by downhill, just as in snowless areas skis are replaced by bicycles. In the Central Asian republics national wrestling has become an integral part of the schools' P.E. programme. Incidentally, specialists have established that wrestling is one of the most effective means of developing boys' strength. And recently this sport was introduced into the curriculum of other republics too.

Swimming is now taught in all Soviet schools. We can be sure there is no more eagerly awaited and enjoyable hour in the schoolchild's day. The introduction of swimming lessons to the school curriculum was also a cause of joy for the parents.

Swimming pools are now being built onto many old school buildings, and new schools are built already complete with standard pools.

In many schools swimming lessons are now held not only in the fourth classes as stipulated by the programme, but in the younger classes as well, starting from the 1st class. In some schools in Tallinn, Riga and Lvov, which have their own pools, these classes are held throughout all 10 years of schooling. Swimming lessons alternate with sessions in sports halls.

The usual P.E. class at school, in older and younger classes alike, lasts 45 minutes. Recently teachers have been trying to prolong classes in the fresh air, on playing grounds by the school, until the severe frosts strike.

Interesting research has been carried out by the Scientific Research Institute of Pediatry of the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences, which regularly organises groups of children and conducts year-round P.E. sessions with them in the open air.

We spoke to the leader of a department of the Institute, Professor Sergei Khrushchev.

"A few years ago we set up health groups for children of 10 and 11 under the supervision of two P.E. teachers in Izmailovo park in Moscow, having advertised it to all interested parents. The children did their P.E. for two years in the open air exclusively. Nothing, neither rain, wind nor frost, would interfere with the classes. We used the simplest range of activities: ball-games, running, cross-country, skiing, and exercises mainly designed to develop stamina. These exercises had one main thing in common: a high motor density.

"At the end of the first year we were amazed by the results. To be quite honest we were even afraid to bring them to the consideration of the public. Children fulfilled all school sports standards and had no difficulty in running distances of several kilometres."

"Physiologists have established that a quality like stamina is basically developed in the early period of a person's life, during his first school years, before sexual maturity. And it is easier to develop strength and speed, and even skill, on the basis of this quality. All trainers who work with young sportsmen know this well."

The Institute of Pediatry's recommendations have stirred a lot of schools to action. They formed the basis of the GTO* complex, which sets the normative requirements for all physical education in the country as a whole, and in schools in particular.

By fulfilling the set standards in the different sports included in the GTO programme millions of Soviet citizens have earned the right to wear a badge of sporting distinction. These include famous actors and writers, musicians and scholars. Outstanding sportsmen Vladimir Kuts and Larisa Latynina are GTO badge-holders, as are the popular singer Lyudmila Zykina, and actor Kirill Lavrov, the world-famous ballerina Maya Plisetskaya, the scholar Academician A. Mikulin and many others.

All members of the Olympic team of the USSR hold the badge.

Amongst the GTO badge-holders are more than 10 million Soviet schoolchildren. Youngsters call the GTO badge the "order" of physical culture.

"The GTO badge is a passport to the land of health!

"Nothing brings parents more joy than to see their children happy. Each of them wishes to raise his son or daughter into a real person, a patriot of their country. But whatever our children might become in their occupation, we above all want them to be brave, strong and fit." These words belong to twice Hero of the Soviet Union, Cosmo-

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* GTO – from the Russian initials for "Ready to Work and Defend the USSR" – is a complex of sporting tests of physical fitness for people of all ages, standard all over the Soviet Union. The GTO is popularly regarded as a path to physical perfection and sporting skill. The new all-Union GTO complex was introduced on March 1, 1972.

...t of the USSR, Merited Master of Sport, President of ...e All-Union GTO Council Alexei Leonov.

The Statute of the CPSU Central Committee and of the ...SSR Council of Ministers of January 17, 1972 On the ...troduction of the New All-Union Physical Culture ...mplex "Ready to Work and Defend the USSR" reads: "The new GTO complex, which is a programme and ...rmative basis of the Soviet system of physical educa...n, is called to play an important role in the raising of ...rmoniously developed citizens, physically fit to build ...ommunist society, staunch defenders of their Mother...d."

The new sports complex contains five levels, which can ...ifiably be called degrees of daring, strength and verve.

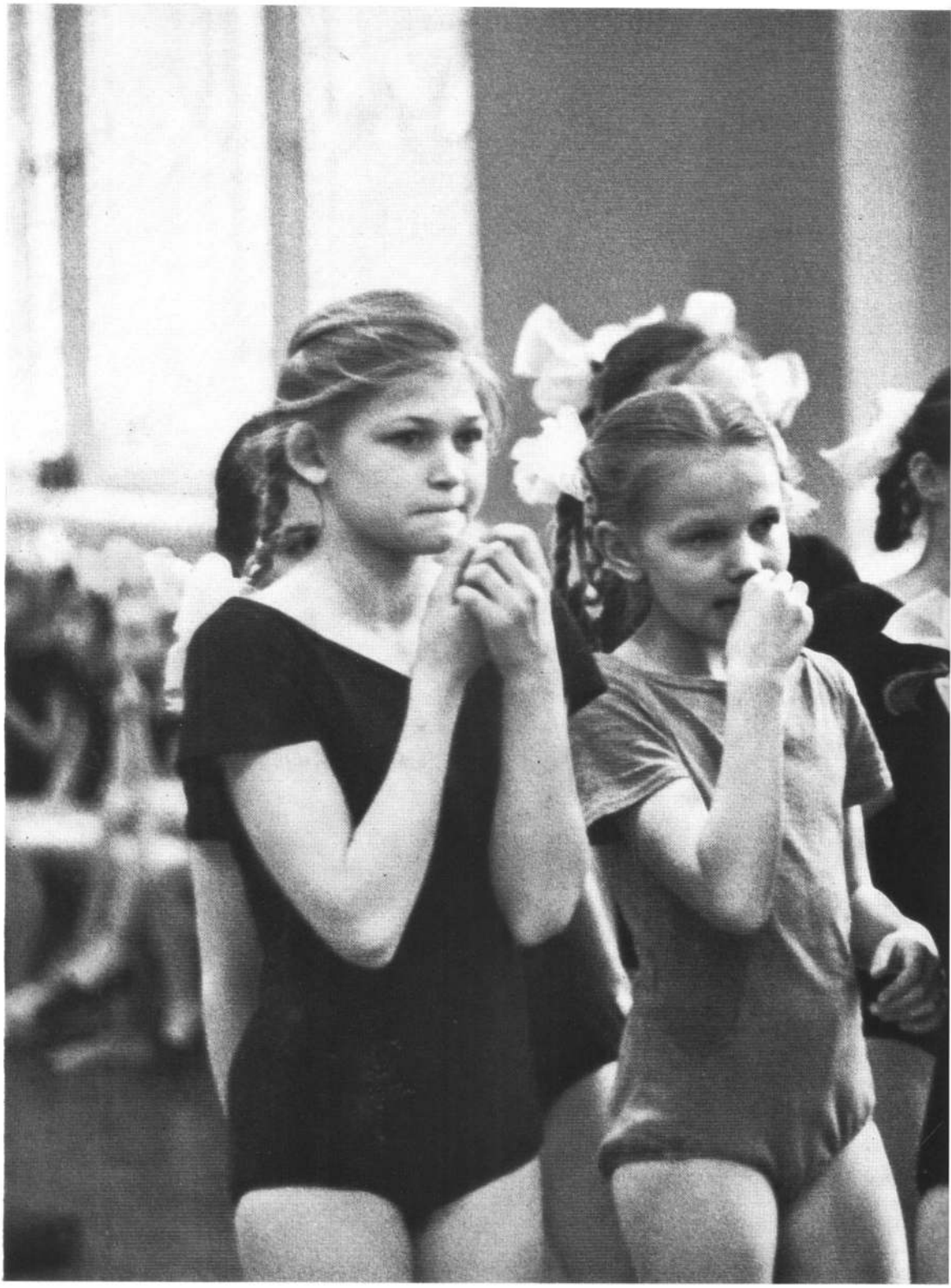
The first level for boys and girls of the 10-13 age-group ...rd to sixth class) is called "For the plucky and skilful". ...ldren of this age are primarily taught to take a con...ous interest in P.E. classes. By holding sessions in the ...TO programme in P.E. groups and, of course, in school ...E. classes such qualities as strength and skill are devel...ed in children and they acquire many vitally necessary ...ls such as, for example, the ability to overcome various ...stacles, to run properly, to jump and throw a ball ...urately.

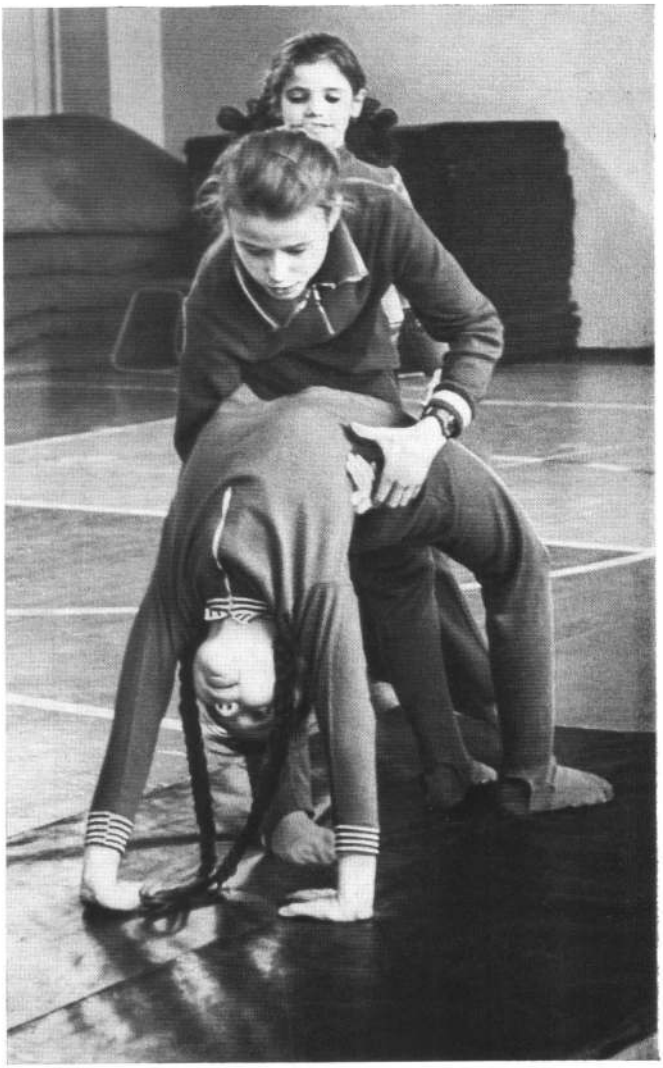
In the course of these first years of P.E. along the GTO ...ogramme children start to display an aptitude for one ...ort or other, and definite sporting talents.

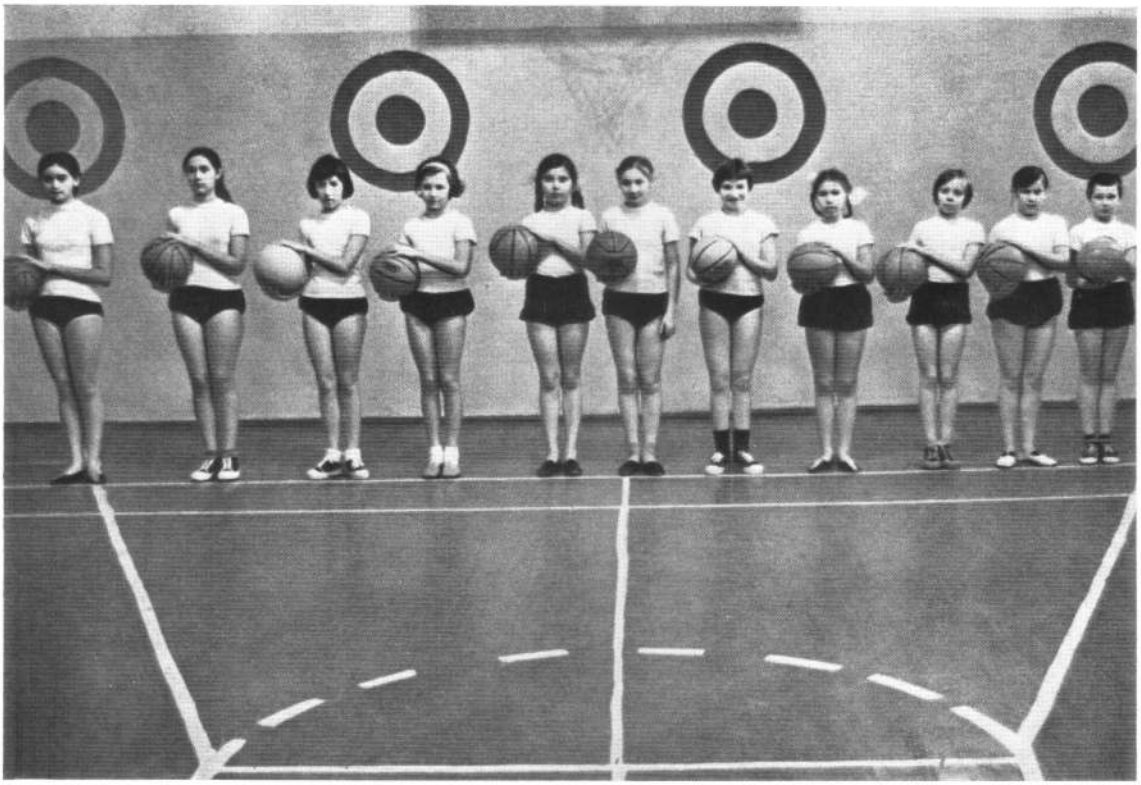
Let us look at the actual requirements and norms in the ...t level of GTO, which are set schoolchildren in the 3rd ... 6th classes.

First of all, they are required to know and be able to ...ply the basic methods of hygiene and the rules of devel...ing fitness, and to perform the sets of morning exercises. ...ey must be generally informed about the development ... physical culture and sport in the country. The com...ex's norms include: running, long and high jump, ...rowing a tennis-ball, swimming (untimed), 1 km cross-...untry ski (in snowless regions: 5 km cycle ride or cross-...untry run), pull-ups on a bar, and climbing a rope with ...e help of the legs. To fulfil the GTO norms boys of the ...-13 age-group have to run 60 metres in 10.0 seconds ...d long jump 3 metres 40. Girls of the same age-group ...ve to run 60 metres in 10.2 seconds and long jump ... metres. They have to throw a ball 35 and 23 metres ...spectively.

The next, second GTO level – "The sporting generation" ... for children of the 14-15 age-group (seventh-eighth ...ass). They have to make significant progress in their ...ysical development and master applied skills, for ...ample skating and cycling, and, in addition, show a ...rticular aptitude for one sport. Remember that the ...jority of children of this age, in addition to P.E. classes ... school, also belong to sports sections or in some ...ses attend sports schools, and the GTO norms







merely serve to give them a basic grounding in physical fitness.

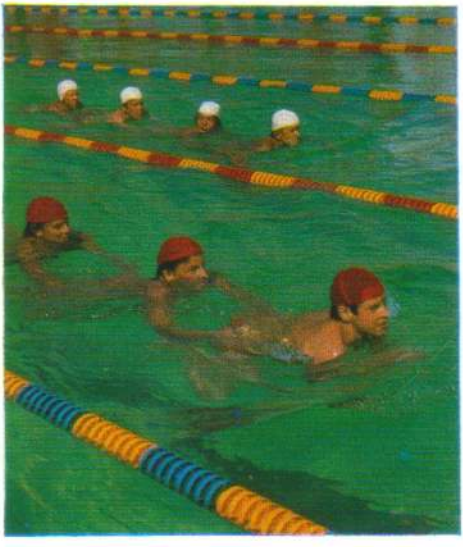
However, the GTO norms are not simple enough to be fulfilled without any special preparation. Hardly every child would be able just like that to do such an element as, to put it in gymnastic terms, "an upstart or leg-first swing-over on the horizontal bar" or to swim 50 metres in one minute. The other events – crosscountry, speed skating, skiing – all require good performances. Add to this the fact that these norms are fulfilled in competition conditions. In other words, with strong opponents and strict judges: everything that goes together to make up the inimitable, tense atmosphere of any competition.

GTO standards are held in every school several times a year, in autumn, winter and spring. When he competes every child is out to win, they all give their comrades noisy support, and as noisily take to heart their successes and failures. Occasionally a loser will burst into tears, but he is soon consoled when he remembers that he will have many another chance on future occasions.

These occasions involve schools with a mass of organisational chores. We asked V. Bocharov, P.E. teacher from the village of Novaya Usman, to tell us how they go about this task.

"There are 400 pupils in our school. Naturally they all do morning exercises and in the summer fulfil swimming standards on the river. But 300 of them play sport regularly. There are sections in the school for track-and-field, skiing, ball-games and cycling. There is also a special section for little ones, who are especially fond of obstacle relays and entertaining ball-games. You ask how the teacher finds the time to cope with all this? Well, I can tell you. I do not record the results, write up accounts of competitions, draw diagrams or even organise competitions. I leave all this to the children themselves. We have set up special groups, one of which deals with the documentation, another with the organisation of the competitions, a third with reparing the sports equipment, and yet another group of voluntary instructors. In addition in each class there are 2 P.E. organisers and 4 team captains. All in all, about a half of the children have some organisational function to perform in sport. But all their activities have to be supervised. And the class teachers willingly take on this responsibility themselves, because in recent years, since the introduction of the new GTO complex, they have become involved with sport themselves.

"Of course I would not be able to do anything without the help of the collective farm, of my former pupils who now work in the Kirov collective farm. They help with the organisation of the competitions, take children on trips and come to the school in their free time, for its doors are open not only to the pupils, but to all the youngsters from the collective farm."



As frequent surveys have shown P.E. classes in most of the country's schools have become more varied and interesting. This however is not enough on its own.

Survey made by the Scientific Research Institute of Child and Youth Physiology of the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences has shown that even extremely well organised classes compensate for only about 11 per cent of the child's daily total of movements. How is he to make up for the other 89 per cent? With morning exercises at home and exercises before classes at school, P.E. breaks during lessons, motor games during break and daily walks with games.

Forty-five minutes seems a terribly long time for the first-years at Sevastopol school No 39 to keep their minds on the lesson. The young teacher can see that they are tired. So, with a clap of her hands, she calls out: "All stand up, hands on your sides and . . . start!" Twenty pairs of eyes sparkle with animation, as they join in their favourite childhood game "Jump – skip, jump – skip". It lasts a mere three minutes, and in that time they overcome their tiredness, stiffness of leg muscles and weariness of arms after those exhausting handwriting exercises. . . .

"Jump – skip, jump – skip." And a few more exercises: "Now fly like birds" and they swing their arms wide open. This makes them laugh – "What do you think we are?

Little babies?" And that is exactly what the teacher wanted them to do, because laughter is the best form of relaxation, "Jump – skip, jump – skip", and then it's time to sit down at their desks.

Now the teacher again faces a class of eager pupils, who shower her with their inquisitive questions. . . .

These little breaks in the middle of the lesson were introduced a long time ago in our schools. Experts believe that nothing is so effective in overcoming fatigue as a few physical exercises, selected, of course, according to children's age and ability.

P. E. breaks are not only a feature of the youngest classes, but of middle and older ones as well. Their method has been worked out scientifically, and approved by the country's ministry of education.

At seminars and courses for teachers of all subjects the procedure for conducting these mid-class sessions is specially taught.

It has been calculated that the systematic conduct of P. E. breaks adds an extra three hours of active relaxation to schoolchildren's weekly total of hours spent in tuition.

For a long time teachers in best schools have been working on ways of turning midmorning breaks into special mini-P.E. lessons, preferably held outdoors, in school playground or sports field. These methods include lightning volleyball tournaments, contests to get a basketball into the net, short relays – both serious and

funny – in other words, anything that the children themselves, with their fertile imagination, think up. These "motor breaks", as they are sometimes called by our teaching specialists, are of course run by P.E. teachers. The first task to be dealt with is compiling a timetable: which class is to do what, and to use which sports ground. But there are enough chores to keep the other teachers busy during the break too: it is not all that easy to take dozens of classes, of different ages, but all equally frolicsome, out onto the playground and, hardest of all, to get them back at their desks.

However, the most important thing is, of course, that every school should have sufficient sports equipment and apparatus.

A number of schools actually construct their own sports fields. This of course involves the active participation of schoolchildren and their parents as well. It often happens that well-known athletes who have retired from competition also lend a hand in such ventures, anxious to pass on their experience to the young generation. As an example of such a construction project we can take Moscow school No 112. Here a 25-metre swimming pool has been built, three sports halls installed (one of which measures 30×18 metres, making it suitable even for football in winter), an open playing field in the yard with wooden flooring. Every Sunday and Saturday throughout the year the playing field throngs with children from all the surrounding blocks. In addition, adults have also started to gravitate to the school's sports complex. In a sense the school with its sports halls and pool has become a sportsclub for the suburb.

Longer "motor breaks" held in the open have become an essential component of the school syllabus in Estonia, particularly in village schools. As a rule these schools

have large plots of land equipped as school stadiums with a mass of diverse and even non-standard apparatus. Schools in other towns of the republic, even in old Tallinn with its narrow streets, contrive and manage to get their own bits of land to give children a chance in their break to run out into the fresh air.

To return to our calculations, it becomes evident that daily breaks of this sort add another 6 hours onto the child's week total of activity, and together with his P.E. classes they bring him another step towards achieving the minimum norm of motor activity for schoolchildren, which experts promote so insistently.

For this reason the Ministry of Education has already given directives to all schools of the Soviet Union to restructure their syllabuses, so as to find both the time and the possibility to conduct games during schoolbreaks and run P. E. sessions in the open air.

The bell rings. The children march out onto the playground. But this is neither a P.E. class nor a competition. It is a school-break, a traditional school-break, but spent playing games, moving about. Imagine how much fun it is for children and what good it does them!

Sevastopol school No 39 is something of a second home for many of its children. It is a day boarding-school, at which the children attend lessons, do their homework, have art classes, play sport, eat their lunch and rest, and the little ones even have an afternoon nap.

There are not many other schools where you would see all the pupils of all ages filing out onto the sports fields after classes. At this Sevastopol school all the children spend at least two hours a day after classes in the open. They play football, volleyball, throw a basketball at the net, jump over a bar and run round a cinder track. And the most remarkable thing is that all these activities take place without any over-all supervision by adults.

The children themselves judge competitions, measure results and announce victors. The teachers only occasionally give guidance.

On the hockey field, which is adorned with an enormous poster bearing the words of a popular song: "Hockey is a real man's game", an attractive young woman – one of the teachers, referees a game. During the breaks she sometimes has surreptitiously to wipe away the tears of her class 3 children. It is no easy job to blow the whistle on these lads, eagerly attempting under the blazing Crimean sun the tactics of Canadian hockey which they have seen on TV. There is of course no ice in Sevastopol, even in the depths of winter.

But small boys will always be small boys, and they want to play like the champions.

In the evening the headmistress, Maria Lapenok, gets

together with the teachers to work out the schedule of sports activities for the next day.

The school has one large and one small sports hall, in which they hold classes in gymnastics and acrobatics. In addition to the usual gymnastic equipment they contain a mass of non-standard items, such as gym walls, and parallel, asymmetrical and horizontal bars designed for children of different ages.

When these two halls became insufficient for the school's needs they equipped yet another "hall" in the open, right beneath the school windows, with gymnastic apparatus, jumping pits and miniature stands for spectators, who, admittedly, seldom remain long in their places as they are also participating in competitions.

All the school's sports sessions are conducted to a musical accompaniment and in addition every class also has rhythm lessons. One day in the week is devoted entirely to sport – this day being called the health day.

Yet another innovation: the bell in the Sevastopol school often rings during lessons. Textbooks and exercise books are laid aside, tests and dictations halted. For four or five minutes all the children perform gymnastic exercises, standing behind or beside their desks. And throughout this period music plays through the

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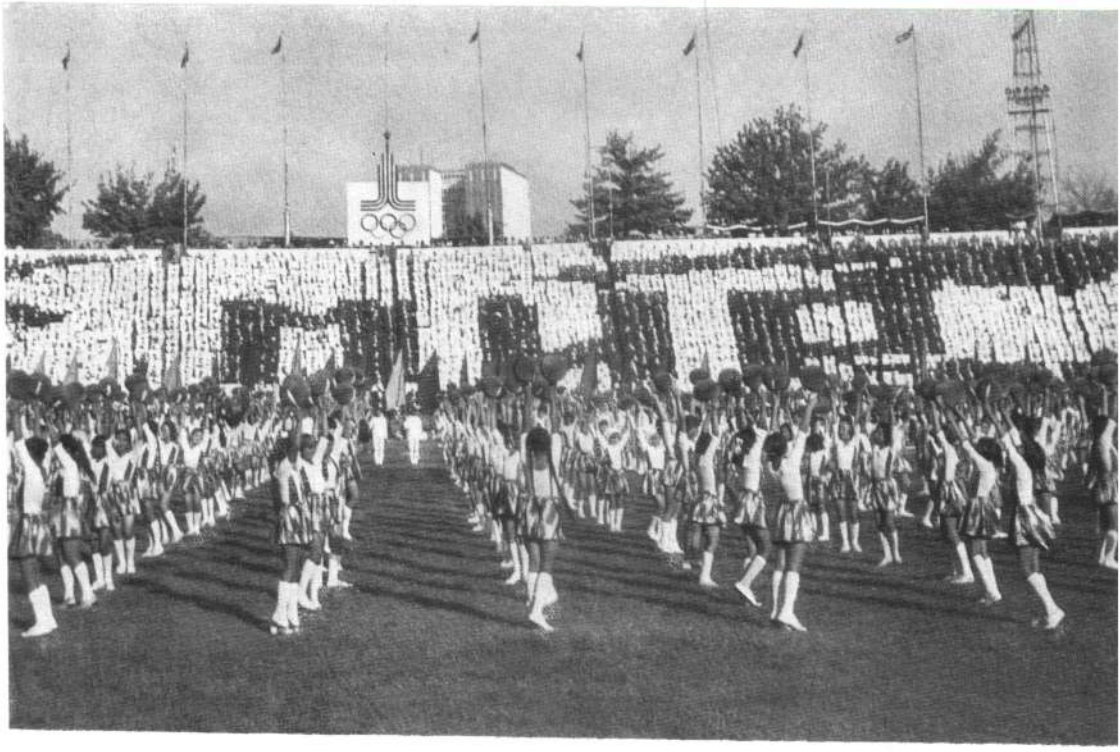


school. Then silence falls once again and the lesson continues.

"The school has a well-organised system of sports activities," we were told by headmistress Maria Lapenok. "The children's health and physical fitness helps them in their studies." She pointed out with some pride that in the last few years in Sevastopol school No 39 no child had received failure grades for its work.

Occasionally cold winds blow across the school and it is lashed by rainstorms. But however bad the weather, when you walk past its walls you will be able to hear the sound of a ball being thrown or kicked around its playing fields and the incomparable, wild shouts of joy emitted by players and supporters. The young voices drown the noise of rain and wind alike.

Many schools have recently, on the directive of the boards of the Ministry of Education and the USSR Sports Committee, started to run sports classes.

Such classes are held, for example, in school No 1143 of the Lyublino district outside Moscow.

Outside the windows dawn creeps across the sky and the window panes are obscured by snow, but it is warm and bright inside, and the ball bounces as briskly as if the children were playing in the summer sun. The ninth class girls, Moscow volleyball champions, are having their lesson.

We asked the girls how hard it was to work in a specialised class like theirs, and how much they spent on their homework.

The answer: about four hours a day. But not four hours in a row: homework sessions alternate with training sessions, some of it is put aside for Sunday or other free moments. On the whole they are able to dispose of their time rationally, something some adults are never able to achieve.

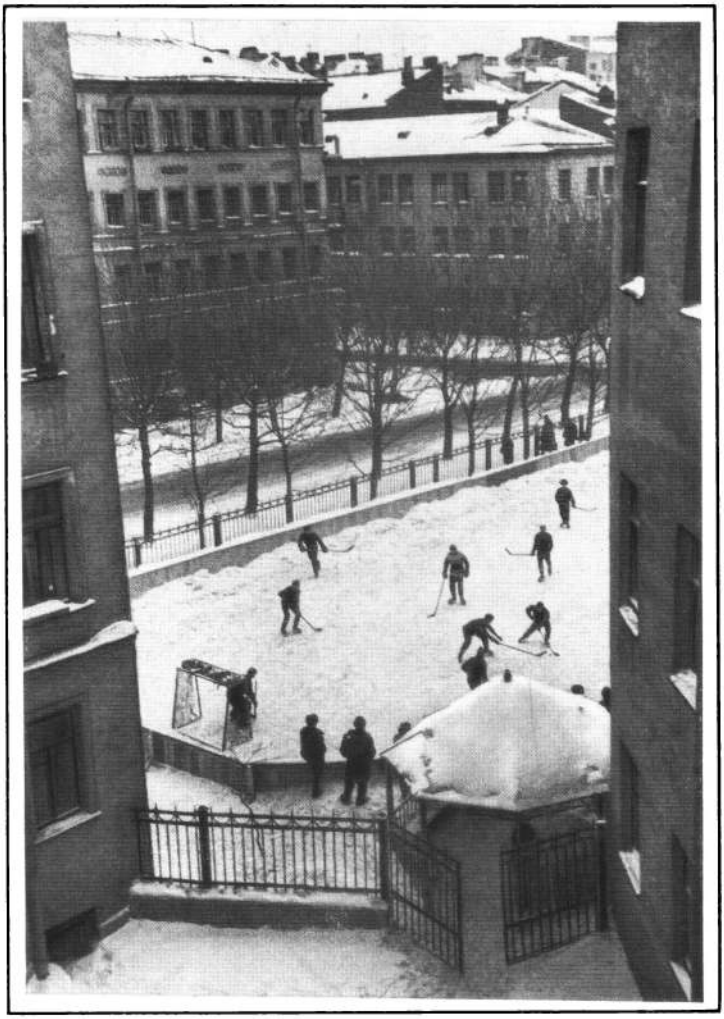
"By setting up special sports classes," we were told by Maria Tereshkova, tutor of studies, "we were able to eliminate the most serious problem for children who belong to sports clubs: how to cope with their work. There were always so many complaints that they had insufficient time to prepare their lessons, that their training load was too heavy and that their day was broken up. Now the special classes, which start with the 4th class, have the best results in the school, without, I might add, any allowances being made. Moreover, we recently held open demonstration lessons in mathematics and Russian in the sports classes, choosing them for the very reason that they were the most outstanding. In addition, children who play sport learn to value their time, and with them we never have disciplinary problems."

Sports classes are precisely those classes which form the strongest link in the schoolchildren's collective, with their established code of conduct, sporting principles and community sense. The dream of many a teacher and

trainer – how to fuse together general and sports education without disrupting the children's routine – has been realised with the creation of these special sports classes.

The Lyublino school with special sports classes is in fact an ordinary school. Yet its special sports classes achieve unusually high results both in sport and in their work.

Every year brings an increase in the number of sports classes in the country's schools. And, who knows, perhaps it is the pupils from these special classes who will cause the surprises with their outstanding results at the 22nd Olympic Games in Moscow.



Sports Fields Near the Home

Sports Fields Near the Home

However well organised a school may be with regard to its sporting activities, this must b backed up with a child's physical activities at home, in the playground and forecourt of his block The problem of encouraging both children and adults to engage in active forms of relaxation near their homes is regarded as an important state objective in the USSR. "To encourage mass-scale physical culture and sport at factorie and offices, at educational institutions and in residential units," reads the document "Guideline for the Development of the National Economy of the USSR for 1976-1980", adopted at the 25th Congress of the CPSU.

The Soviet physical culture movement now face an important social task: the transition from the mass development of physical culture to the universal.

Resolution of this problem is unthinkable without well-organised work amongst children in residential areas.

What do children play outside their homes? Th little ones, like all children, play hide-and-seek, hopscotch, ball-games and skipping games. But as they get older they start playing proper sports – volleyball, football, basketball, hockey.

In 1975 the Committee for Physical Culture and Sport of the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted a statute On Measures to Improve Sports and P.E. Work amongst Children and Adults in Residential Areas. A standard statute on the P.E. and sports clubs in the residential areas was worked out. Sports clubs run by the housing management started to appear all over the country.

Acting on a special decision of the government, funds started to be set aside for sports work with children which accrued from rents. Many clubs receive financial aid from trade-union organisations, parent committees or industrial enterprises, which act as patrons.

Leningrad's experience in setting up such clubs is worth noting. There are now 328 of these in the city, of a wide variety – sporting, technical, song and dance. These clubs attract parents as well as children. Parents take part in competitions alongside their children. The experience of the Leningrad organisers shows the extent and variety of the possibilities for setting up clubs in residential areas.

Let us take a look at the Torch club, situated on Harbour Street in Leningrad.

This club began with the creation of a figure skating section. A group of parents united their efforts and invited a trainer. A rink was poured in the forecourt. A great number of children applied to join the section and more trainers had to be invited. Then they made another rink, this time with artificial ice.

The figure skating section of the Torch sports club holds training sessions on artificial ice three times a week. The club also has table-tennis, wrestling, judo, weightlifting, gymnastics (primarily for 15-16-year-olds), football, ice-hockey, general fitness and radio-enthusiast sections.

The club is administered by its Council, which consists of 16 parents and all the trainers. The artificial rink is an expensive pleasure, and consequently figure skating classes have to be paid for, but it is a very small fee – 4 roubles for three months of classes.

In addition to its sports sections the club has various groups of enthusiasts: motor-boating, radio-engineering, poker-work, copper chasing, and photography.

Sessions are held, as a rule, two or three times a week, in the afternoon or evening.

It is not only children who are drawn by the bright windows of the clubhouse, its neatness and comfort. Lonely old people would occasionally drop in, and then become daily visitors, helping out with one thing or another. It often happens that the choreographer forgets that her working day is over. Tamara Kirsanova was in her time a well-known dancer with the Kirov ballet company. Now her fine, skilful hands create fancy costumes which would be a credit to any professional dressmaker.

In addition to his working day Dr. Samuil Babushkin from the physical culture dispensary also spends time in the club. The motor-boat club arose out of the voluntary initiative of engineer Victor Zhiliayev. Everyone who crosses its threshold will at once feel at home in the club, which offers warmth and interest to all.

The furnishing of such a club costs money. Great assistance is provided by its patrons: neighbouring scientific research institutes and the Baltic factory. But the club's spirit, its atmosphere is created by all those who help run it, people who do not grudge the local children their free time.

The Spark club operates in the Vyborg district. Its patron is the Karl Marx engineering amalgamation. The Spark organises excellently run competitions on the GTO programme, sports entertainments and matches between football and ice-hockey teams from neighbouring blocs, long and short excursions into the country for children.

The Compass club is famed for its tennis-players. The Globe has an excellent handball section, and the Ring a particularly popular boxing section.

The Ring is on Rossi St. The walls of the club are decorated with trophies and certificates, and in special cases stand golden cups it has won in district, city and even

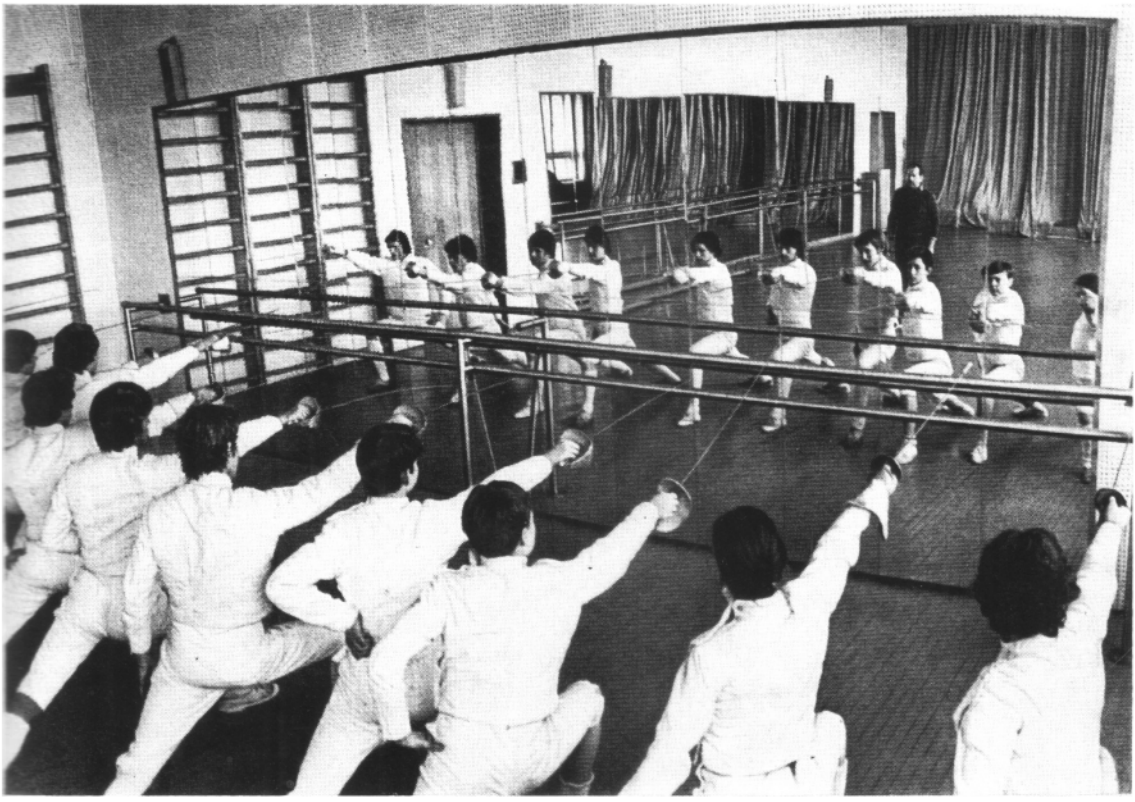
all-Union competitions. All the same the Ring is open to anyone who wishes to play sport. As in all local clubs the children are not divided up into groups according to whether they are good or not at a sport. The children all live near the club and play together with their neighbours and schoolmates.

The club in the new housing estate behind the Alexander Nevsky Monastery is called the Courage. This is a sports club for so-called problem teenagers. About 500 boys from 40 schools of the district, aged from 12 to 18, belong to its groups and sections. Their attendance of the club becomes their first real interest in life.

The sports sections of wrestling, boxing, volleyball, basketball, and table-tennis are run according to the programmes followed in special sports schools. The club also has a radio-enthusiasts' group. Recently the club acquired a subsidiary – a special sports hall, which has enabled it to extend the scope of its activities.

. . . With a loud din of footsteps about twenty children from the fifth class of a local school race each other into the hall. The little children from the third class sneak in behind their older schoolmates. They are still too young to be admitted, and they try to be unnoticed.

"All right, you little imps, you might as well come along in now that you're here," laughs the trainer, Alexander



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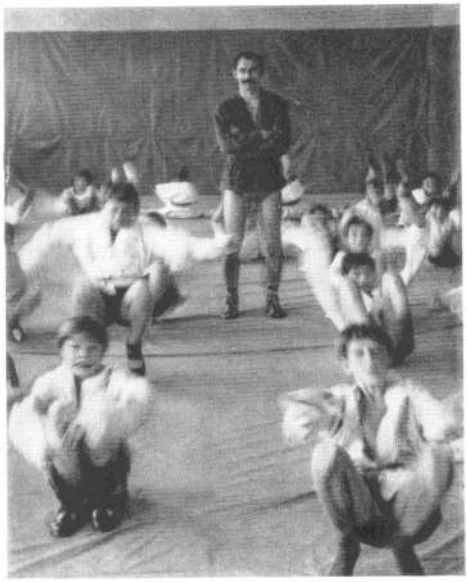
Kotkin, giving each of them a welcoming pat on the shoulder as he ushers them in. "But mind you take off those coats and hats, or you'll get too hot in here and catch colds the moment you go out again into the snow!"

Without a murmur of protest the little boys obey his command. They huddle up against the walls, careful not to get in the way of the table-tennis players. But in a little while they are wielding ping-pong bats themselves, and wildly careering round the hall in pursuit of a basketball.

Many parents have expressed their admiration at the way the Courage has literally reformed their children, developing in them such qualities as a sense of purpose, determination, diligence and a desire to excel.

There are already more than twenty such clubs in Leningrad.

At present there are amateur clubs of this sort in practically all our cities and towns, and in thousands of villages and country settlements.



Let us now travel to the southern port town of Odessa. The clubs in Odessa's residential districts cover a wide range of sports: football, gymnastics, swimming, rowing, volleyball, basketball, badminton. The Dolphin club for children, whose speciality can be guessed from its name, also organised 36 football teams, badminton and gymnastics sections. This is largely thanks to the efforts of a local P.E. teacher, Praskovya Belan. Her example inspired teachers from the neighbouring school No 67 to help run activities at the club. And there are dozens of such clubs in Odessa's suburbs. The city ran a competition for the best forecourt sports ground. This initiative was approved by the city's executive committee and the city committee of the CPSU.

Kharkov now has a public Design Bureau, which works out designs for standard sports complexes in residential areas.

The achievements of this bureau have been discussed in Soyuzsportproekt (the national sports facilities planning organisation), the USSR Sports Committee, the YCL Central Committee and invariably received high praise. These designs are now widely used in the construction of sports grounds in residential areas all over the country.

"Dear parents,

"A construction team is being organised to build a forecourt stadium, where your children will be able to play. All those who wish to help are requested to give in their names to the housing committee."

This very appeal was pinned up a few months ago in one of the residential areas of Sverdlovsk.

In a matter of days a site for a standard sports ground was cleared. Dozens of children joined their parents on

its construction. Many of them worked for the first time as building labourers, bricklayers, carpenters, painters and concreters.

Advice was freely given by local specialists in these trades and sports veterans. Now the cheerful music of children's voices can be heard from early morning until late evening from this new sports centre, built entirely by volunteer amateurs.

Thousands of such suburban clubs, in conjunction with school sports clubs, help Soviet children grow up healthy and strong, with a bright outlook on life.

But, you may ask, what about the child who lives near a stadium? Can he use its facilities? The answer is: yes, of course.

Children's sports clubs have been set up in all large stadiums.

When anxious parents ask where they can place their growing son, who did not manage to enroll at the local sports sections in time, they are told: go to Luzhniki; and when your capricious little daughter can't make up her mind whether to take up figure skating or gymnastics you will also be advised to take her to Luzhniki, the nation's biggest stadium. Such is the reputation of the trainers at Luzhniki, and the extent of their experience of working with children that parents from all over the city bring their sons and daughters to its children's stadium, situated in a picturesque bend of the Moskva river.

What is the special appeal of this stadium?

Let us ask the children themselves: Alyosha Gaponovich, aged 10: "In our yard the other children won't let

me play football with them because I'm too little. But in Luzhniki they even let me be goalie, and teach me to play back and forward. And I've also learnt how to play tennis."

Marina Popova: "My mummy and granny are very pleased that I play outside even when it's raining or windy or very cold. Because you can't miss training sessions, can you? And they are never cancelled however bad the weather."

It might strike you at first as a bit paradoxical that at Luzhniki with its dozens of sports halls, its palace of sport and indoor arena the children are kept in the open all the year round. But this is precisely the main distinction of the children's stadium, with its unshakable faith in the beneficial influence of nature, of fresh air, sunshine, rain and wind. This is why, whatever the season, whatever the weather, all the sessions with children are conducted in outdoor facilities, and even the swimming classes are held in an outdoor pool.

Customarily the girls in Luzhniki tend to go for figure skating and gymnastics, while the boys favour ice-hockey and wrestling. The figure skating section is extremely popular, and has achieved notable successes, the children even performing their own ballet on ice and entertaining other children in the school holidays with their ice shows. They also take part in various competitions to earn official ratings in the various age-groups.

The excellent grounding of fitness which the children receive in Luzhniki gives them a good chance to get into the city's numerous special sports schools. The Luzhniki trainers, in their time famous athletes, are busy not only instructing the children in the various sports, but also teaching them good conduct. For in addition to sessions in the sports sections the children go with their instructors on skiing and summer hikes, perform ice shows, and they are taken by them to see new films.

The trainers receive a lot of help from parents. These latter help with the paper-work for competitions, with the judging, organising and dressing photographic window-displays, sewing up costumes for their shows. Parents and trainers together keep a watch over children's progress at school.

About 2,000 children belong to the 68 groups in the children's stadium. But the population of this children's republic is constantly increasing. Every Sunday, winter and summer, the stadium has open competitions for all those who wish to come along. Over a season up to 25 thousand boys and girls take part in these. It is no surprise, therefore, that many of them subsequently become members of sports clubs. Incidentally, payment for the classes is purely symbolic: 25 kopecks entrance charge for swimming, while use of the sports fields is free. But, as the trainers believe, this payment helps organise the children, instils in them a responsible attitude to their attendance of

classes. Remember that all children, without any limitation of age or otherwise, are accepted in these classes. In one and the same group you will find children of computer scientists and car-workers, the daughter of a cleaning lady from the local post-office and the son of a famous Academician.

Not each of them, of course, is destined to be a champion, but they will all experience the happiness attested to by the wise Latin proverb: Mens sana in corpore sano.

An Active Pioneer Summer

The arrival of summer is a time all school-children long for: summer holidays.
The large majority of Soviet children go to Pioneer camps in these holidays, and spend happy weeks in these colourful holiday centres, situated in picturesque natural settings.
Thousands of Pioneer camps are scattered over banks of rivers and lakes, in forest clearings and sunny valleys.
With arrival of summer parents are spared the headaches of where to send their children for a holiday: this problem is dealt with by trade-union organisations at parents' place of work.
More than 50 thousand Pioneer camps were in operation in different areas of the country in 1977, and their number increases yearly. The organisation of the children's holiday is attended to jointly by the trade unions, YCL, and organs of people's education, health-care, culture and, of course, by schools themselves.
Almost every factory and large institution has its own country camp for children. The holiday period in one of these is as a rule 26 days. In addition there are children's sanatoria, also organised by trade unions, for children with fragile health. These accommodate more than

300 thousand children yearly for period of 20-45 days.

Whatever the type of camp the holiday programme includes P.E. sessions and sport. Every day invariably begins with morning exercises. Whatever the weather children run out on to the playing fields, dressed only in light sports kit, form lines and perform sets of exercises worked out according to age-group. These sessions are conducted by a special member of the camp staff, usually a qualified P.E. instructor.

It has become a tradition to hold little Olympic Games in each camp.

The children form teams, each team being given a name and having their own colours, emblem and flag.

The competitions cover a wide range of events – races of different lengths, from 30 to 500 metres, long jump and high jump, throwing the tennis-ball, swimming, cycling, rowing, archery or shooting with an air-rifle, relay-races and, of course, games, such as volleyball, football, handball and basketball.

A champions' pedestal is erected on the field and an Olympic flame burns in a special bowl – in other words, everything like in real Olympics.

The winners are awarded prizes. Sometimes these are "medals", made of chocolate in gold and silver wrappings. And it is touching to see with what delight and solemnity the children receive these medals on red, blue or green ribbons.

Sports festivals are also a tradition of Pioneer camps. A particular favourite with the children are the water sports festivals, with the participation of Neptune, water-sprites and other water creatures.

A Pioneer camp holiday is a time of exciting excursions, unforgettable impressions and amazing new discoveries.

Never before in a letter had little Svetlana Yerdakova, from Blagoveshchensk, used so many exclamation marks, as in the short joyous letter she wrote to her parents: "Our Pioneer camp is in a fabulous dense pine forest! Nearby there is a big, incredibly warm lake! Just imagine how beautiful it is! It's really hot, and the sun's shining all the time! I go swimming and sunbathing every day! . . ."

But Sveta's mother was disturbed by her daughter's rapturous exclamations. She was particularly worried by the last one: "I go swimming and sunbathing every day!" In her reply she urged her daughter to keep well away from the lake. Her argument was pretty compelling: "You don't even know how to swim!"

Her daughter read these lines and smiled. The Pavlik Morozov Pioneer camp, named after the Pioneer hero, to which Sveta had gone for her holiday, is a special swimming camp, and it takes precisely those children who cannot swim, who have been unable to learn how to swim

at school. They are coached twice a day by instructors having first "swimming lessons" on dry land, and then in the water in a specially boarded-off shallow part of the lake. But each lesson is arranged as a game, with balls, rubber rings, polystyrene boards, a game in the course of which children cannot but acquire the skills of swimming. In this way many children find they can swim 25-30 metres after only 15-20 days of such instruction.

"She's a capable girl, and plucky," commented Sveta's

swimming instructor T. Kolesnik, "she quickly found her feet in the water. Then she even helped the others learn the ropes. While she's been here she's managed to fulfil all the GTO summer standards, both in swimming and in track-and-field."

Along with Sveta Yerdakova about a hundred children learnt to swim in the camp.

The Pavlik Morozov Pioneer camp is the oldest in the Amur region. It has been running summer camps since 1934. In addition it is one of the most sporting in its area, having the most experienced supervisor and P.E. leader. For 30 years without a break the camp has been supervised by L. Zolotovskaya, and the P.E. and sport for

almost as long by P. E. instructor A. Gulevich, a secondary school teacher from the Transbaikal railway boarding school No 17.

Every day in this Pioneer camp has its own special appeal. How can the children ever forget the fun of Neptune's Day, or the Fun Races Day, whose highlight is a many-stage relay-race between the various Pioneer units. It runs across the water, through the forest, around the stadium. And the excitement of the GTO competitions! First the camp holds a Runners' Day, Jumpers' Day, and a Throwers' Day. Then the best all-rounders contest the title of champion. On Sunday a parade is held at which the winners are awarded badges and certificates.

The Pavlik Morozov Pioneer camp is also one of the best-equipped in the Amur area: it boasts a stadium with a running track and a well-tended football pitch, a gymnasium, a swimming sector in the lake, and basketball and volleyball courts. The stands in the stadium are particularly tightly packed when they hold friendly matches with neighbouring camps. These happen several times a week.

The camp takes the children of railway workers, constructors of the Central Section of the Baikal-Amur

Railway,* and the Zeya and Bureya hydroelectric power stations. In their letters home the children, when describing their life in the camp, are no less sparing than Sveta with their superlatives and exclamation marks.

This is not the only camp in which swimming is the main sport. There are other camps in the Soviet Union where all the children are taught to swim.

B. Fastovsky, chairman of the Amur regional sports committee, described to us how every spring when they inspect the camps, checking their readiness for the summer, they pay close attention to the state of the swimming pools and swimming sectors in rivers and lakes. Special week-long seminars of swimming instructors are also run.

* The Baikal-Amur Railway is the largest construction project of Eastern Siberia and the Soviet Far East. The length of this railway is to be about four thousand miles.

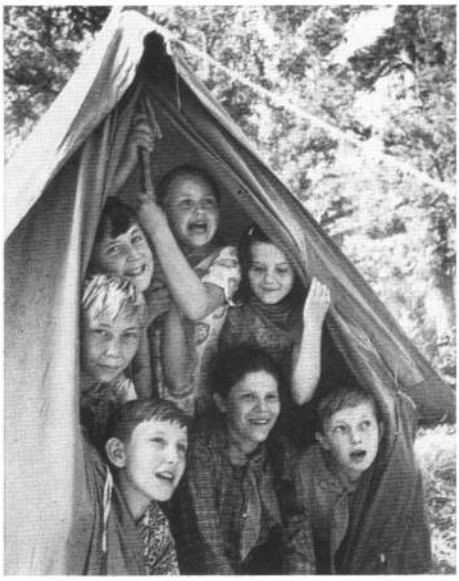
Many trainers and P.E. teachers go to Pioneer camps in summer where they work as swimming instructors. For example practically all the children in the Ogonyok (Light) Pioneer camp, which is run by N. P. Chugunova, a republican category referee and in her day one of the top speed-skaters of the Amur area, and T. A. Shakhova, a teacher from the Blagoveshchensk catering college, fulfilled the GTO swimming standards.

Let us visit yet another camp – the Young Constructor in the Kalinin region. It takes in the children of construction workers.

Well-laid-out and well-tended – it was built, after all, by the children's constructor fathers – the camp is situated on the shores of a lake in a pine forest. A typical day in the life of the camp would proceed as follows.

7.30. The children spill out of the large log-cabins at a run. A few minutes later the P.E. supervisor gives the command to get ready for morning exercises. The session is conducted at a brisk, lively pace. (The set of exercises is changed every week.) Then the children rush with their towels to the lake. Here they wash, swim and rub themselves dry.

10.30. Today the fifth unit's programme includes preparations for the forthcoming spartakiad. Under the guidance of their trainer the children learn to throw a tennis-ball, master the technique of long and high jump,



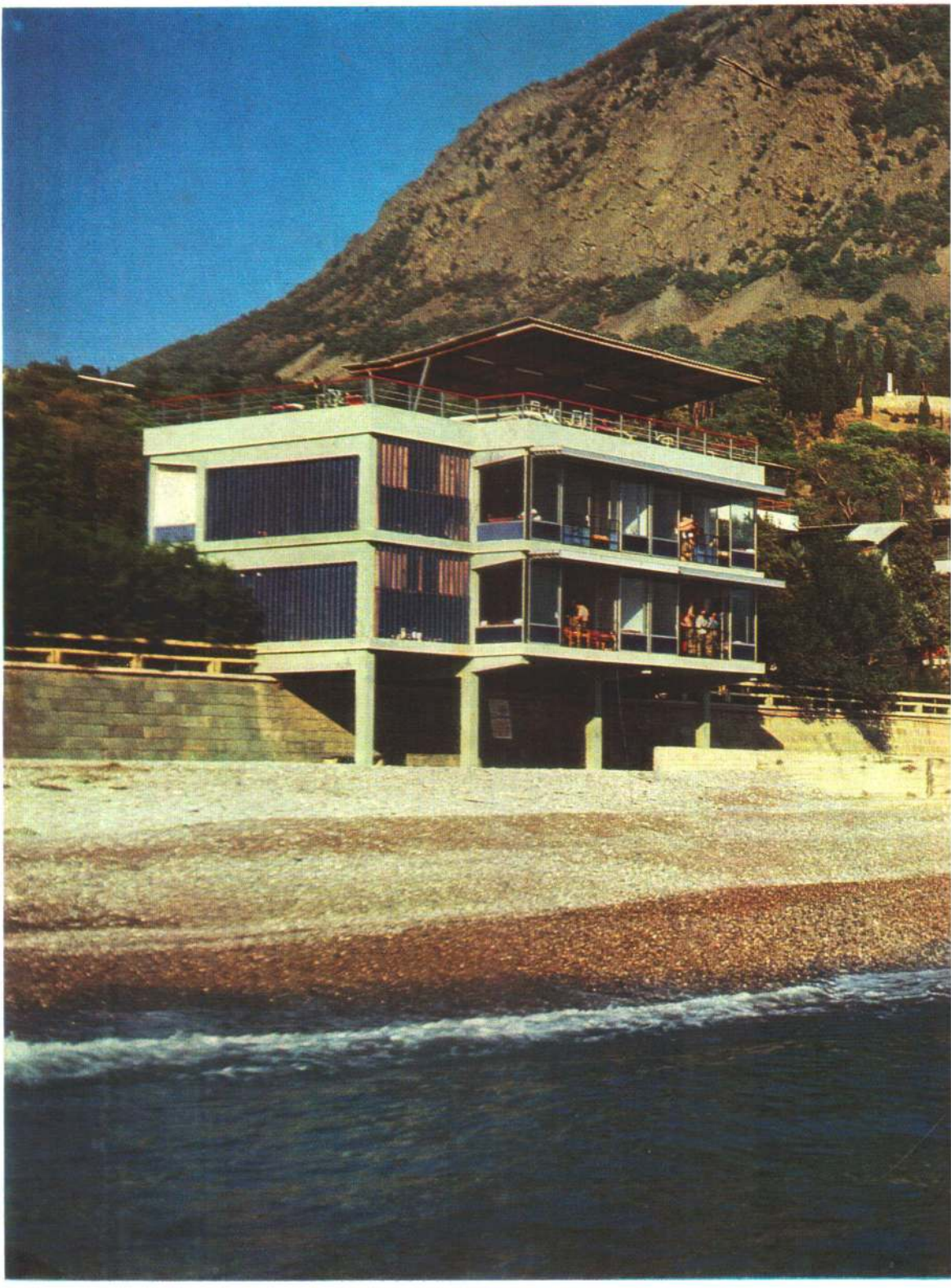
do pull-ups and push-ups. The sessions last an hour and a half.

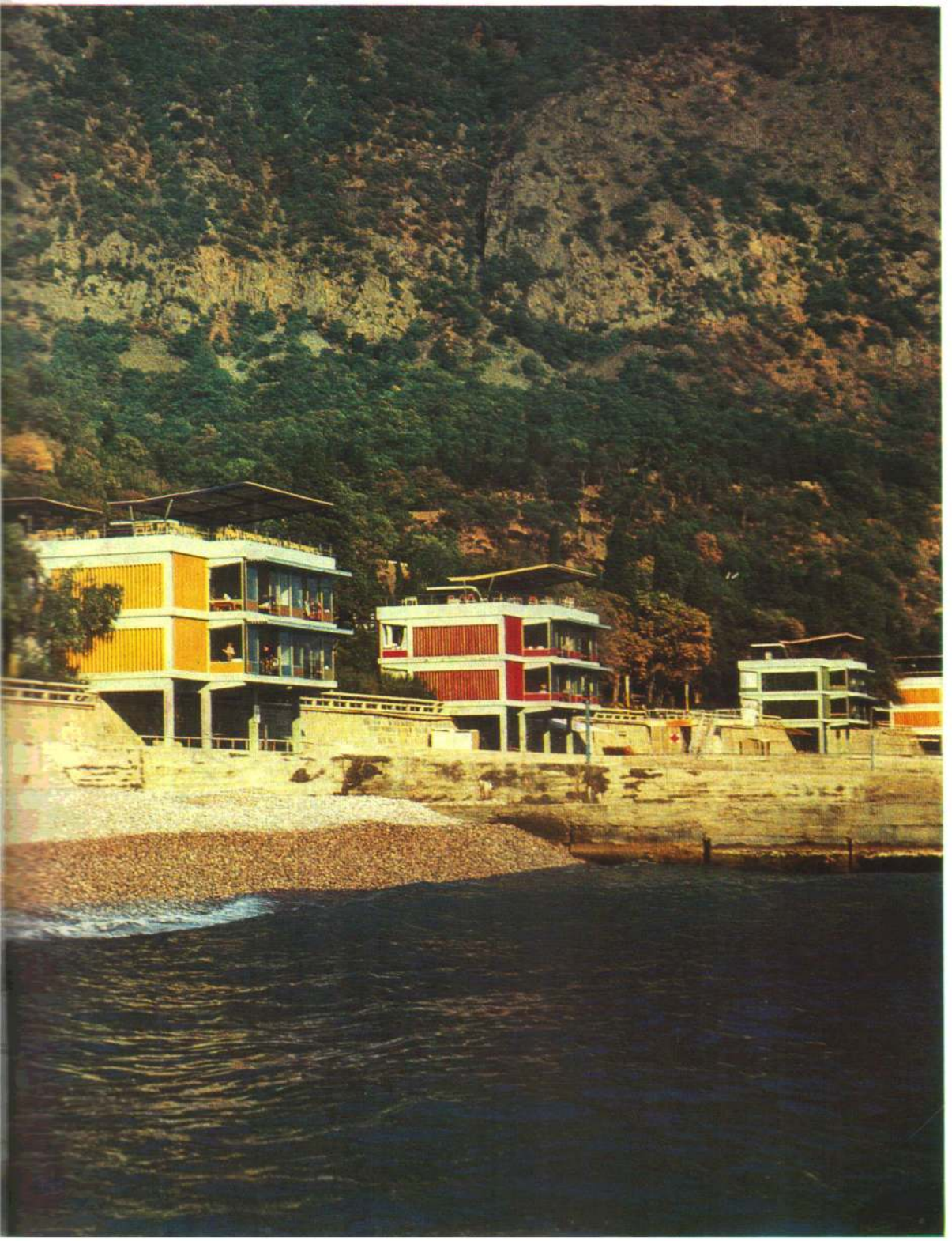
11.30. The units assemble at the swimming pool. It has ideal facilities: a 25-metre pool and two 10-metre pools. There is a paddling pool for the smaller ones, who splash around with rubber rings and inflatable logs. The swimming instructor teaches them the basic skills. Those who can swim play water-polo and other games. The instructor conducts races with the help of a stop-watch, and the children race one another to the side, or try to be the first to recover a coin from the bottom of the pool.

Each child here is set special objectives – for example, to learn during his stay in the camp to swim one or two hundred metres, or to master a new stroke.

14.00. Time for the after-lunch siesta. Completely unbeknown to the rest a few children are preparing the costumes and props for the Neptune Day. Even some of the group leaders do not know about this – after all, a secret is a secret.

17.00. The fun races for the littlest ones. All dressed alike they go out onto the stadium carrying flags of different colours, maces and balls. First the girls race off down the running track, pushing balls before them and circumventing all sorts of funny obstacles on the way, such as garden scarecrows, or a massive wooden bear. At the line





the boys impatiently await their turn – and they have somewhat more difficult obstacles to get round, such as a deep pit, or a high fence, and through all this they have to remember to hand over the baton properly.

The races are always an uproarious success, both with the youngsters and the adults on the side-lines.

19.00. Supper time for all. After supper the older units set off camping, taking tents with them in which they will sleep in the forest. They are seen off by the whole camp, with songs, and wishes for a good hike. The youngest children are being visited by a group of gymnasts from the Ostashkovo gymnastics school.

21.00. The entire camp sleeps. Only the teachers' windows are still lit up: they have to prepare the next day's programme. . . .

An "Olympic village" in Nizhni Tagil? Yes, that's the name given to the children's sport centre in the Pioneer camp of the steel plant in Nizhni Tagil. In all the plant has 6 Pioneer camps for the children of their employees.

For example in the Pioneer Flotilla the children learn the basics of the sailor's trade: they are taught to row and to sail. The banks of the Tagil lake in the Olympic village is summer home and training centre to many future athletes. All six camps boast their own stadiums and playing fields.

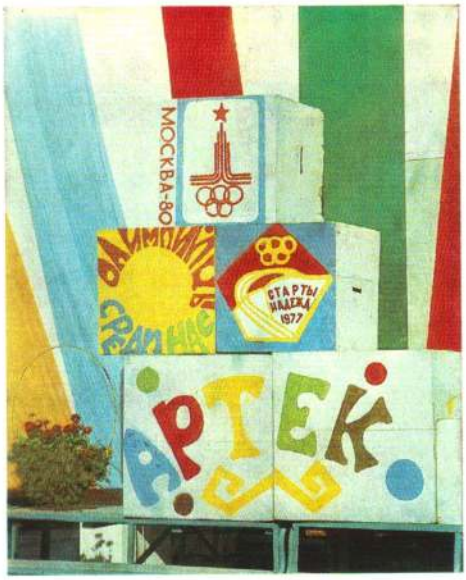
There are thousands and thousands of Pioneer camps in the Soviet Union of all types, but the pearl of them is, undoubtedly, the Artek. The Artek is not only the largest national children's camp, it is the largest international one. Over the 50 years of its existence more than 450 thousand children of 140 nationalities have holidayed in it, and every summer the flags of 40-50 countries fly from its flagstaffs.

This is a proper town, with cheerful, bright dormitory blocks. There are 200 buildings on its territory, spread along the banks of the sky-blue sea, at the foot of Ayu-Dag, the legendary Bear Mountain.

The buildings dazzle the beholder with their bright colours shining in the sun, and graceful lines. With so much to please the eye it is simply impossible for children to be grumpy, badly-behaved, quarrelsome or offensive to the others. And their high spirits and cheerful mood invariably reflect on their health. Thus it is true to say that their health is built up by nature, the Crimean climate, and also by the facilities provided by the loving hands of adults. The Artek camp is living proof of the unstinting care taken of our children by the Communist Party and the Soviet government.

The Artek has all the necessary facilities for children's recreation and for building up their health: long, sunny days, a warm, gentle sea and a seven-kilometre beach, dozens of playing fields, inviting blue swimming pools, solaria, sports halls, exhibitions and libraries.

Children come here from all over the world: from the



arctic north, from tropical Africa, from towns and villages of central Russia.

The camp's medical service has at its disposal well-equipped laboratories, surgeries and physio-therapy rooms, a sick-bay and an isolation ward. But the sick-bay is never filled to its capacity – the children here are simply too healthy! Their health is attended to by 30 doctors and 65 medical assistants. The order of the day, the menus, the physical and mental load are all worked out in the Artek on a scientific basis. Help in this is provided by scientists from the Crimean Medical Institute, the Kharkov Research Institute of Child Health Care, and the I. M. Sechenov Institute of Physical Treatment and Medical Climatology.

In June 1977 the first international children's festival was held in the USSR. As its motto a line was taken from a favourite children's song: "Let there always be sunshine!"

The festival was attended by Pioneers and the leaders of children's organisations from France, Italy, GDR, FRG, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Cuba, Mongolia, of the national children's organisations of Britain, the scouts of India, Iran, Afghanistan and many other countries.

The delegations spent several days in our capital. They laid wreaths on the grave of the Unknown Soldier, visited the Mausoleum of V. I. Lenin, were shown round the town by local children, visited exhibitions, the circus, sweets and toy factories, schools and Pioneer camps. And then friendship trains took the festival's participants to the Artek all-Union Pioneer camp. Here a festival flame was lit and the festival flag was unfurled, as blue as the sky against which it fluttered. Campfires of friendship were kindled in all the chapters, and the first day of the Artek festival was officially named the Day of Solidarity, Peace and Friendship. It was an action-packed day, a day of meetings, of new friendships. There was an international post-office and solidarity bazaars, at which souvenirs made by the children themselves were sold. Competitions were run in drawing, poster-design, singing and solidarity meetings held. Children met famous peace-workers, winners of the International Peace Prize, and distinguished visitors to this children's forum. The evening ended with a manifestation of solidarity with all peoples fighting for peace, national independence and development, democracy and socialism.

The distinguished guests at the festival included the famous child specialist and public figure Dr. Benjamin Spock (USA), Cosmonaut of the USSR Pyotr Klimuk, Secretary of the Chilean Communist Youth Organisation Gladys Marin, the famous Russian children's poetess Agnia Barto, General Secretary of the International Committee of Children and Youth Organisations Tadi

Alföldy (Hungary), the well-known French writer Pierre Gamarra and many others.

During the festival in the Artek there were many entertaining events. Sports games called the Small Olympics were held in the main stadium, in which children vied against one another in speed, skill and strength. Tourists tackled cliff climbs, and young chess players pitted their skills against those of grandmasters. On the Arts Day the camp rang with music from morning to evening. The national orchestras demonstrated their countries' art and every participant in the splendid concert was awarded a festival prize.

A Labour Day was held under the motto: "Working for solidarity", and every child could discover the joy of working alongside his friends for a common cause. All the

money earned during the Labour Day went into the solidarity fund.

The USSR Day featured such events as the exhibition "The USSR Is My Country", quizzes and competitions on the theme "Do you Know the Soviet Union?", and meetings with Soviet Pioneers.

"Mankind is obliged to give the children the best it has." These words are written into the Declaration of Children's Rights, adopted by the UN. The festival delegates were given tangible evidence that the principle "the best for our children" has become one of the fundaments of life in the Soviet Union.

Every year more than 11 million children holiday in the USSR's Pioneer and health camps, which employ a total staff of about half a million specialists – teachers, doctors, P.E. instructors and catering staff.

ВСЕСОЮЗНЫЕ СПОРТИВНЫЕ ИГРЫ ... СТАРТЫ НАДЕ

ИДЕМ ДОРОГОЙ ЛЕНИНА, ДОРОГОЙ

The trade-union organisations spend annually about 450 million roubles on children's holidays. This money is allocated from the state social security budget, the trade unions' budget, income from businesses and fees paid by parents. The last-mentioned are, incidentally, very small. The cost of one child's stay in an ordinary Pioneer camp (salaries of the staff, children's food and the cultural facilities) is 40-50 roubles. Ten per cent of parents send their children to camps free, and 50 per cent pay only 9 roubles.

Thus, the money paid by parents for holidays in Pioneer camps only covers 30 per cent of their actual cost.

For older schoolchildren there are work and recreational camps (or sport and work camps) on collective farms, state farms, forest stations etc. In these children work in the fields for two or three hours a day, for which work, incidentally, they receive a wage. The rest of the time they play games, swim, read and in general conduct the same activities as in an ordinary holiday camp.

Camps for the oldest children are equipped in accordance with the particular interests of the young hikers, technicians or musicians, and most of their free time in these camps is devoted to sport.

Almost one and a half million children holiday in these camps for the oldest classes. One special feature of these camps is self-service, something the children really like as it frees them from too much supervision, and gives scope to their imagination and enterprise.

Children who for some reason or other have to remain in the city throughout the summer are also cared for by public organisations. Pioneer camps are run in many ordinary and sports schools, in parks and stadiums. Food is laid on, and the daily programme includes games, sports, an afternoon rest, and sometimes excursions and hikes into the country. In the evenings the children return to their families.

But the proportion of these camps in the general total of Pioneer camps is very small and declining, as the demand for them falls: as a rule all the younger children are in country camps, and the older children prefer independent camping holidays, which any school is able to organise.

Parents and teachers go to these camps together with the children.

Some schools even organise special holiday sports camps for, for example, volleyball or football players. And in the camp of one Vilnius school the English teachers holiday along with the children, and the camp has a strict rule: only English may be spoken on its territory.

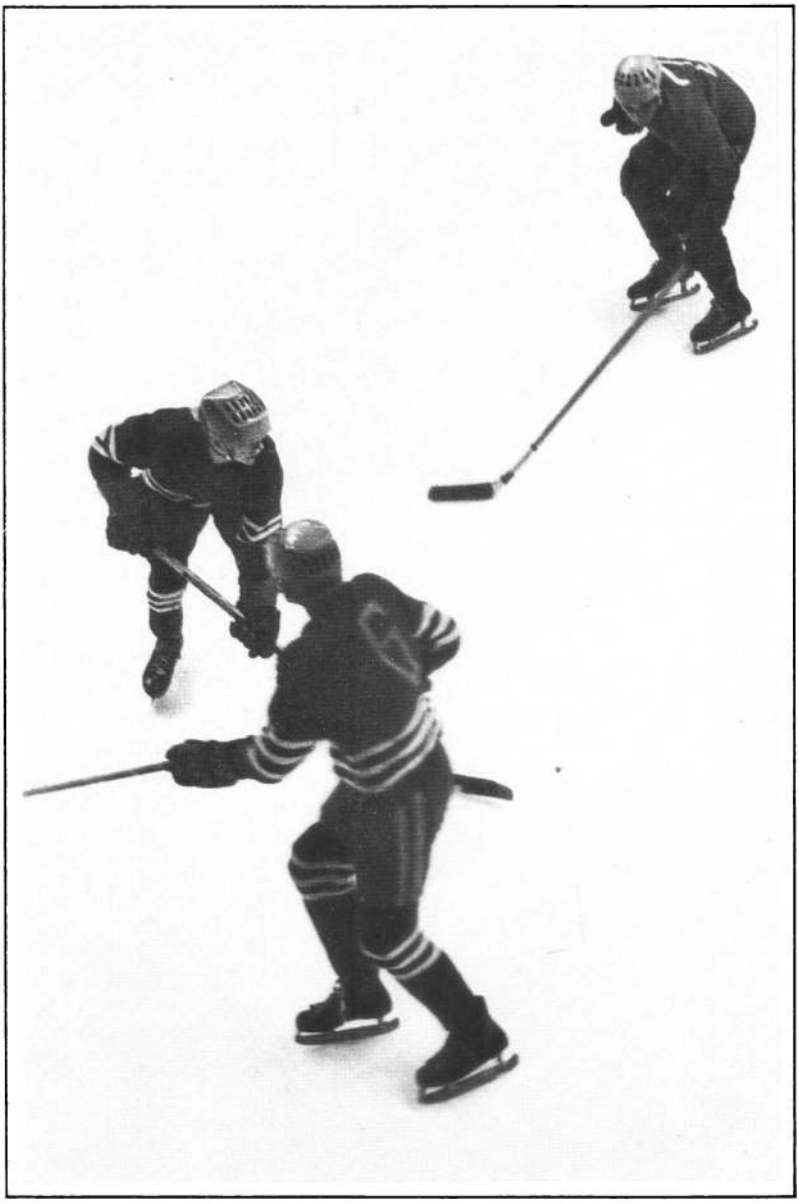
In addition to their summer holidays children also have two weeks off in winter. Many Pioneer camps also open their doors in the winter. They have the same daily programme, with the only difference that skating and skiing take the place of swimming and football – although they

also play football in the snow, a game that is a favourite with professional sportsmen too. And of course there is everyone's favourite game – ice-hockey.

Every child likes the sensation of speed, and troika rides are a special treat on the winter programme, along with traditional Russian winter games in the snow and dances around a New Year tree.

During the first two weeks of January – the winter holidays – all trade-union rest homes and holiday centres are transformed into Pioneer camps.

Children return fit and strong from summer and winter camps, brimming over with delightful impressions and memories of the fun races, games, pioneer hikes, water festivities, singing and games round the campfires and many many other things besides, which will always remain in their hearts.



Future Champions Go to Their Marks

Future Champions Go to Their Marks

It is good for children to have somewhere to train and someone to pass on to them the secrets of sporting skill. But they also need the stimulus of competition – tense, large-scale contests and races, which give them the opportunity to try out in practice the sporting skills they have acquired in training.

Youth is the time of hopes and dreams, and children's eyes are always directed towards the future. What small boy does not dream of standing on the top step of the Olympic champions' pedestal, and what trainer does not harbour ambitions of turning his best lad into an Olympic gold-medallist? But there is only one sure path to victory: through training and competition.[1]

Restricting a child to P.E. sessions in his school and competitions against his classmates would mean blocking his path to sporting perfection, to the improvement of his results. The staff of the Pioneer and Komsomol organisations who initiated the holding of all-Union competitions between Pioneer units and different schools, set themselves the objective of broadening the scope of children's competition to national level.

But how is it possible to involve all the children of our multimillion nation in competitions of

this sort? Thanks to the efforts of children's sports organisers, the first such competitions were held shortly after the end of the Second World War.

One of the most widely-circulated newspaper in the world, the Soviet children's paper *Pionerskaya Pravda* (whose daily circulation is almost ten million), called all the boys and girls of the Soviet Union to take part in the first all-Union skiing competitions. Children responded enthusiastically to the paper's call, and more than a million young skiers turned out on the ski-tracks.

This number was tripled the following year. . . . Since then these skiing races have been held every year for more than thirty years.

Pionerskaya Pravda's initiative served as an inspiration for other media services. The children's radio-station Pioneer Dawn founded a prize, the Silver Skates, and invited youngest skaters to participate in their skating competitions.

Soon after this the Polish youth paper *Swiat Mlodych* had the idea of organising international children's competitions.

After this on the initiative of the YCL Central Committee, the Sports Committee of the USSR and the newspaper *Sovetsky Sport* further mass competitions between children's sports clubs were organised, such as the Leather Ball, the Golden Puck, the Neptune, the Plaited Ball, the White Rook, the Silver Skates and many others.

The competitions are held in schools, residential areas and Pioneer camps. At this stage the participants are counted in millions. The winners of this first stage go on to take part in district or city competitions. The district or city champions then take part in regional, republic or area competitions. And the winners of these earn the right to take part in the all-Union finals.

The children's competitions are covered by newspapers and magazines, and on the radio and TV.

The winners receive awards – medals, cups, diplomas, certificates of merit and badges.

Every year millions of Soviet children take part in the *Pionerskaya Pravda* skiing races.

In many towns and regions there are other competitions in addition to these. In the Cheliabinsk region, for example, there is a ski race called the Ski-Track of the Rosy-Cheeked Ones, in Vologda the Snowstorm, in Kemerovo the Snow Sniper, a biathlon with crosscountry skiing and throwing snowballs at a target.

In Bashkiria there is a city of petrochemists – Salavat. The famous Salavat Ski-Course runs from almost the centre of the city through its woods and hills. On Sundays practically all the inhabitants, old and young, set out on this track.

It is not only a place for skiing excursions – the most varied competitions according to the GTO programme

and relay-races are held on it. Often you will see entire families turning out for a race.

The Skiing Festival is a traditional event for the engineers of Yaroslavl. It is organised by the Volga-Dweller sports club. The participants are all local people, adults and children. The top pize is a cup awarded to the best sporting family.

In connection with Moscow's election as host to the 1980 Olympic Games a new, unusual form of skiing race has been devised, called On Skis to Moscow. This name is of course purely symbolic, the idea of the race being to cover a distance equivalent to the distance between another city and Moscow. The USSR is a huge country and for some regions this distance is measured in thou-

sands of kilometres. But the idea has been a success with children and every winter they enthusiastically go out skiing every day, marking the kilometres in a little book eagerly counting how much further they have to go to Moscow.

Skiing races are always a big hit with our schoolchildren.

The first Soviet skiing champion, Merited Master of Sport Vladimir Kuzin, who supervised the *Pionerskaya Pravda* race and was on several occasions its senior judge, highly evaluates the results of the young skiers.

"Over the last few years," he told us, "not only have the results achieved by the competitors improved considerably, but also their technique at taking long ascents and coping with downhill stretches. The children are also get-

ting better at working out race tactics, although in the heat of competition children, with all their spontaneity and zest, tend to forget their trainers' plans. But results are not the main thing in these Pioneer races. What really matters is the festive mood, the contact between the children, their helping one another, testing their strength and trying their utmost to make the distance."

Alongside these mass-scale ski-races there are nation-wide speed-skating competitions for the Silver Skates prize. The children race over 100, 200 and 500 metres, depending on their age. All those who wish can enter the competition.

However the fact remains that there are even more popular competitions, namely, those in football.

Football is the most popular game in the USSR. There is hardly a small boy anywhere who does not play football. At times you will even see girls out on the football fields.

All that you need for this game is a more or less flat field and a ball. If necessary a couple of briefcases make an excellent pair of goalposts. And that's your football pitch. No one watches the clock in these matches, the youngsters reaching scores of 10 and even 100 goals! A game on a

Sunday or in the school holidays can last without a break for hours. . . . This is football in the "wild state". Sometimes it can do more harm than good. Organised football is a quite different matter.

How can "wild" football be tamed, and brought under rational control?

After long and careful thought and the trying-out of several possibilities, the experts hit on the idea of the Leather Ball.

The Leather Ball is an all-Union children's football fan club, organised on the initiative of the paper *Pionerskaya Pravda* and the YCL Central Committee.

In summer 1964 the entire country resounded with the appeal: "Boys! Join the Leather Ball club! Organise your own football teams in your neighbourhood! Get down to training! Prepare to take part in the all-Union tournament fot the prize of the Leather Ball club!"

A Central Board of the Leather Ball club was formed incorporating such well-known Soviet footballers as our "Golden" goalie, Lev Yashin, forward Victor Ponedelnik and back Albert Shesternyov. Well-known trainers, P.E. teachers, headmasters, stadium managers, representatives of the Central Council of Trade Unions, of the YCL Central Committee, of the Sports Committee of the USSR and of various ministries and agencies made up the rest of

the members. The board was headed by Merited Trainer of the Russian Federation M. Sushkov. All over the country, in the republican capitals, in towns and villages, adults enthusiastically went to the help of our children. Football fields in all the city and district stadiums were granted free, and new fields laid in neighbourhoods and on waste ground. Collective and state farms set aside plots of ground for football fields.

Experienced trainers, referees and experts in child P.E. worked out the Statute of the All-Union Leather Ball Sports Club, and on the running of competitions between neighbourhood teams for a prize awarded by this club.

And the competitions got under way. First neighbourhood teams from adjacent streets pitted their forces against one another. The winners then contested district and city championships. The winners of these were invited to compete for the regional or republic titles.

The club centres were flooded with letters about the matches held. They came not only from the recognised football centres of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tbilisi, Kishinev and Yerevan. As it turned out small boys were just as keen on football in Siberia, in Central Asia, in the Far East and even in the Far North – accounts were sent in of matches held in Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Igarka, Dudinka and even Chukotka.

The club's HQ summed up the results of the first round of the competitions and noted that more than a million young footballers had taken part in the games! The winning teams from the republics and regions were invited to play off the all-Union final in Moscow.

From the organisers' first meetings and conversations with the victors it became clear that the winners of the local matches were those teams that had followed planned training schedules, and not confined themselves to football but included track-and-field, swimming and hiking.

As a rule, each victorious neighbourhood team had its own trainer. These included the most diverse people: veteran footballers, Komsomol officials, young workers and parents (mothers as well!) all united by an interest in football.

The general conclusion reached by the Central Board after meeting young footballers was that they had at last put a stop to wild football. Its place had been taken by organised football, a far more interesting and attractive game for young players. They started to take a serious interest in sport, and practically all of them fulfilled the standards for the GTO badge, first or second class. They buckled down to their lessons, and stopped annoying local residents with their long and noisy games.

Subsequently the final rounds of the Leather Ball contest were held in the nation's best stadiums, in Tbilisi, Gorky, Voroshilovgrad, and watched by thousands of

spectators. Episodes from the matches were even televized, and covered by famous commentators, in nation-wide broadcasts. The matches were refereed by republic category judges, and closely watched by trainers of the nation's leading teams.

The number of participants in this yearly tournament has now reached 8 million. Boys have everything they need to develop their skills in their beloved game of footer. There are dozens, even hundreds of football fields in every city, in every region, and children's teams are equipped with their own colours. Funds have been allocated to finance away matches in other towns, neighbouring regions and republics. Books for the youngsters about football have been published.

Football tournaments at this young level are now entering the international arena. Clubs are being organised

in other socialist countries on the lines of the Leather Ball. The finals in the USSR were visited by football teams from the GDR, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Young Soviet teams also travel abroad – those that win the all-Union finals.

And while we are still on the subject of international children's competitions, we should mention that the most mass-scale of these are the athletics tetrathlon – 60 metres dash, high and long jump and throwing the tennis-ball.

The first stage of this competition is held locally. It is contested in the Pioneer camps of Bulgaria, Hungary, the GDR, Czechoslovakia and the USSR. Then the best tetrathletes are selected from a comparison of the results and national teams of 6 boys and 6 girls each appointed.

The 100 schools of each country which have held the best organised and most mass-scale competitions, and produced the best results, are awarded international diplomas by the competition's founder – the Polish paper *Swiat Mlodych*. The very best teams are invited to national finals. In the USSR the national finals have been held in Moscow, Minsk, Odessa, Kiev and Perm. In 1977 more than 30 boys' and girls' teams took part in the finals in Perm. The victors were the girls' team from Vitebsk school No I and the boys' team from Alma Ata school No 9. They won the right to defend the honour of Soviet

Young Pioneers in the international final of the Friendship competition in Poland.

These finals were contested by 24 teams from Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Finland, France, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union.

The Friendship Cup for the over-all team victory was won for the fifth time by the youngsters from the USSR, regained after a seven-year break. On this occasion the Soviet boys finished first and the girls second to the GDR.

Although these Pioneer competitions are held in accordance with all the rules of sports contests, what counts most in them is not the rivalry of the young contestants, but their friendly mutual assistance, exchange of experience, communal hiking trips, evening gatherings and other festivities.

The participants in the finals are usually accommodated in a Pioneer camp. They spend their holiday together, train together and prepare for the events together. A spirit of friendship and international solidarity presides in the camp.

Every year the popularity of the Pioneer tetrathlon grows. More and more schoolchildren are taking part in it. Now these contests bring together more than 10 million boys and girls. Their results are also improving, and already cannot be called merely juvenile. Thus, in the 60 metres sprint the record for the girls is held by Doyna Speenu from Romania with 7.8 secs., and the boys' record is 7.2 secs. held jointly by three runners, Luvsan Avgituil from Mongolia (1967), his fellow countryman Dordjelek (1972) and Soviet schoolboy Yuri Ovcharenko (1973).

An equally popular track-and-field event, held with the participation of Soviet children, is the Fun Relays competition. These were started in 1973 on the initiative of the YCL Central Committee, the Sports Committee of the USSR and the USSR State Broadcasting Service. The Fun Relays include all sorts of relays – trick relays, obstacle relays and straightforward relays – and are often combined with various games and amusements. All the participants in these contests must be able to display enterprise, skill, pluck and stamina, to apply their strength and retain their presence of mind.

The spectators can watch tug-of-war, the two teams holding on to the rope for dear life, or various original

ВСЕСОЮЗНЫЕ
Золотая
" шайба "
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relays in which a ball is passed back and forth, either by hand or by foot.

With each round the relays get more and more complex, acquiring more elements. In the first round the contestants have to jump over a hurdle, in the second they have to crawl through a narrow corridor, in the third throw a ball at a target, in the fourth race each other on scooters, in the fifth climb over a high fence, in the sixth race up a hill.

The team games and relays alternate with individual bouts. Like, for example, the cock-fights. The "cocks" come out into the ring, and, with their hands behind their backs and hopping on one leg, try to knock their opponent out of the ring. Whoever does it first is the winner and brings his team extra points. . . .

Of course these games and contests do not have a fixed set of rules or a compulsory programme for all – each neighbourhood and each school has its own games, its own relays and its own contests. The only thing which is common to all is the actual idea of mass contests in mobile games.

Every final in such competitions is treated by the children as a true festival of physical activity and sport.

It is opened with a trumpet fanfare, which is the signal for young gymnasts to run out onto the field where they perform gymnastic exercises to musical accompaniment. They are followed by a parade of standard bearers, who march around the stadium while the orchestra plays. They are accompanied by young buglers and girl drummers, all in colourful costumes. . . . Finally the actual participants in the final day of the competition come out.

The announcer reads out the names of team members over the loudspeaker, describing their hard road to the final, listing the victories they achieved.

The teams then greet one another. These greetings are not straightforward gestures, they are theatrical and mannered, each team trying to outdo their rivals with its fanciful style.

Then the competition proper starts. The first out onto the battlefield are the team captains. Large targets are placed before them and they are set the task of hitting the bull's-eye with a ball. They each have the right to five throws. The ones who throw straightest win the most points for their team.

Finally the actual team relays begin. One, two, three. . . . Gradually each team accumulates more and more points.

The relays are followed by the individual contests, which are then followed by team games and tug-of-war.

The spectators noisily cheer and applaud. The victors are greeted with shouts of Hooray! The fans shout words of encouragement to their favourite teams.

The Neptune mass children's competitions are a similar success with youngsters.

BAUER

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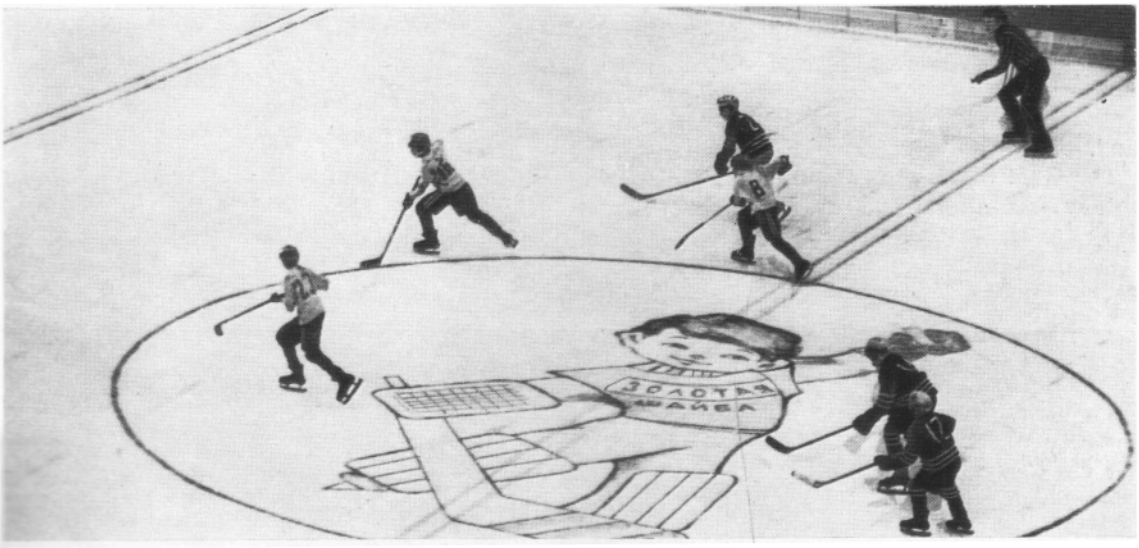
The Neptune club was founded by the YCL Central Committee, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions and the Sports Committee of the USSR, in collaboration with the State Broadcasting Committee of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Central Council of the All-Russia Society for Life-Saving on Waters.

The Neptune races all take place in the water. The competitions are held in several stages. First schools, Pioneer units and camps race one another, and then the best of these meet at the finals which are held in a festive atmosphere.

Several million children take part yearly in the swim-

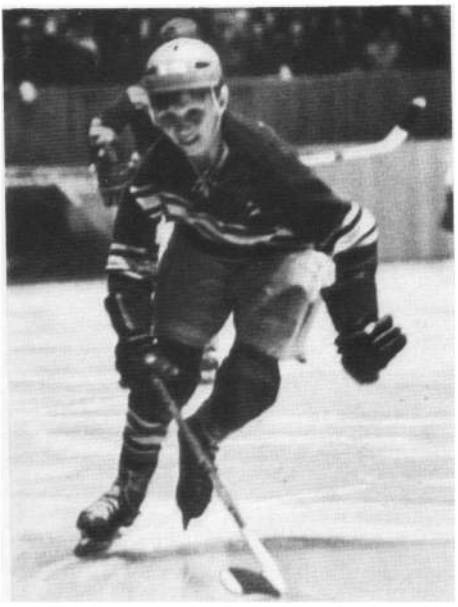


ming races for the Neptune club's prize. These contests have considerably stimulated interest in swimming in schools and promoted the setting up of swimming instruction courses.

No discussion of mass children's competitions in the Soviet Union would be complete without a mention of the Golden Puck club, to which literally millions of young ice-hockey fans belong. The Golden Puck club was founded in 1964.

Thousands of enthusiastic volunteers responded to the appeal launched by the Komsomol and came to work as trainers with boy's teams set up in neighbourhoods. Sponsors were appointed to every forecourt to help with the solution of any financial or technical problem.

The first round of the Golden Puck competition was held in 1965. It was contested by several hundred thousand young hockey players.



The first final round of the Golden Puck took place in Moscow. Moscow's citizens warmly welcomed their guests, and the capital's best hockey pitch – the Palace of Sport in Luzhniki – was made available for the final matches.

The main prize, a hockey stick with the autographs of the Soviet national team members – several times world and Olympic champions, went to the Puck neighbourhood team from Moscow.

But the Muscovites did not retain their supremacy in children's ice-hockey for very long. The following year the title was wrested from them by youngsters from Dzerzhinsk in the Gorky region, then it passed to Novosibirsk, Cheliabinsk, Sverdlovsk, and not only to major cities, either.

Like the Leather Ball club the Golden Puck is not restricted to the territory of the USSR. Very soon the young hockey players started holding international matches, and Soviet boys did well against their colleagues from the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Sweden and Finland.

The Golden Puck has attracted millions of young ice-hockey fans to an active participation in the sport. Now there are about three million youngsters involved in the

competition every year. Such ice-hockey stars as Vladislav Tretyak and Valeri Kharlamov came up through the Golden Puck competitions.

Soon the Golden Puck acquired a little brother – the Plaited Ball, a club for bandy hockey fans, a native Russian game. It transpired that in many parts of the country youngsters prefer the little orange ball to the flat black puck of ice hockey. The competitions are run along the same lines as the Golden Puck.

This is what some of young players themselves have to say about their game:

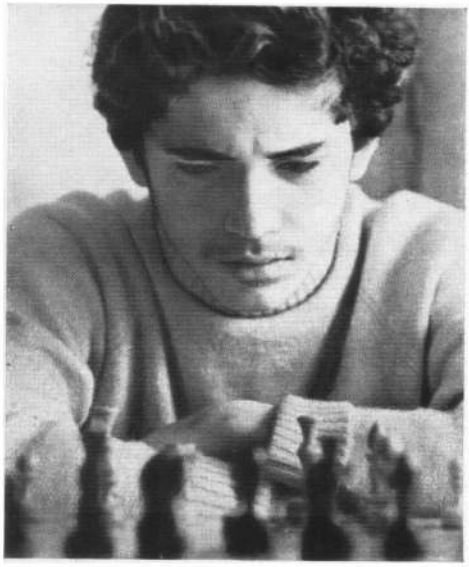
Andrei Berezin – from Dmitrovgrad in the Ulyanovsk region:

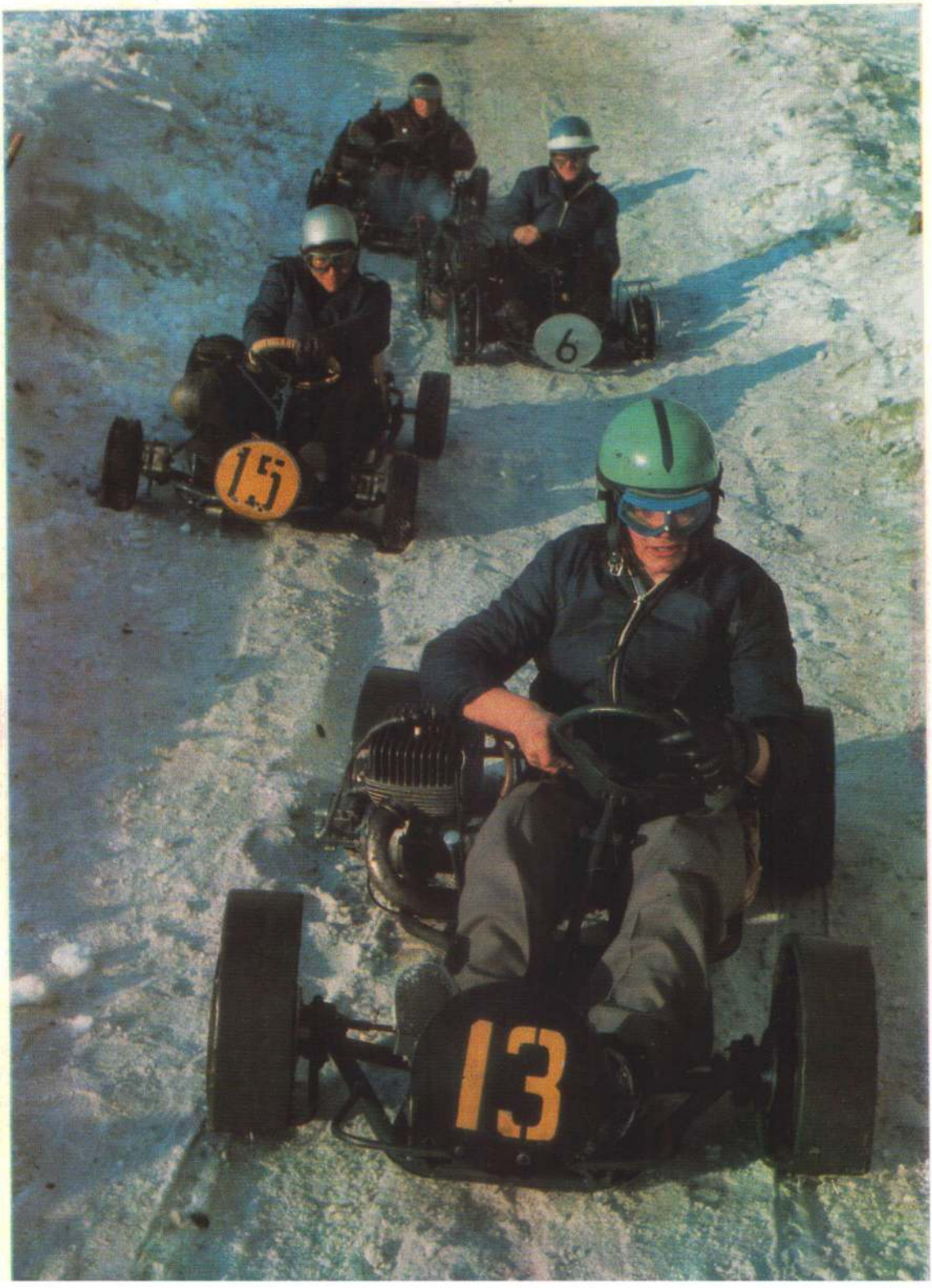
"Bandy hockey is a high-speed game, played with a small, light ball. When you hit the ball it flies far, to the other end of the pitch and a player has to be very nimble, with a good technique and a sure eye to get the ball in the net.

"Our team came into being in 1976. We started preparing for future competitions right from the word go."

Mikhail Ignatov from Korsakov:

"Our team was organised in January 1976. Before that we played ice hockey, and when the first-ever bandy competition was announced we decided to try our hand at this game. And it proved to be a sound decision, because we won the contest."

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Vladimir Khromov from Khabarovsk:

"Speed, agility, and the wide expanse – that's what I love about bandy. At first my mother used to complain: you'll catch a cold, she would say, running round in a frost like this with just that thin jersey on you. And there were in fact frosts of minus 20 and more. But we were hot, we were hot in any frost!

"There are 13 guys in the team besides me. They're all my friends. Some of them are in my class, and the rest became friends through bandy. In our team we all play for the team and each other. We pour our own rink, set up the goal posts, fix on the nets, mark out the lines. . . ."

It is interesting to note how the geographical extent of the Plaited Ball contest expanded. In recent years the finals have been played off by neighbourhood teams from such towns as Pervouralsk, Birobidjan (Far East), Kursk, Ussuriisk, Irkutsk, Chita, Syktyvkar (Mordovia) and Alma Ata. And the number of youngsters who take part in the competition has already topped a million.

However even more boys and girls take part in the Hopeful Starts.

The Hopeful Starts are multi-event competitions. Depending on the traditions of a school, and the climate they include the most diverse events, of which, incidentally, there must be at least seven. At various stages volleyball, hockey, skiing, swimming, track-and-field and shooting teams are set up in each class. The Hopeful Starts are not only for individuals, but involve the participation of whole classes. In this way even the most "unsporting" children are brought to physical activity and sport.

It is no surprise that, for all that they were only started a year ago, the Hopeful Starts have already won great popularity and universal acclaim.

It is doubtful whether any other country in the world holds such large-scale multi-event contests. 14 million schoolchildren took part in the preliminary stages of the Hopeful Starts. The Hopeful Starts have been declared a component part of the All-Union Schools Spartakiad. Their programme contains the full variety of the mass Pioneer and school competitions. An all-Union council has been set up, composed of well-known trainers and athletes and the volunteer organisers of other popular children's competitions.

After numerous competitions in schools and Pioneer units the finals are held in the Artek, and these are of an impressive scale, involving 3,600 children from 130 sports classes in schools from all the Soviet republics.

The stands of the stadium are packed with thousands of spectators. These include Pioneers, spending their holiday in the Artek, and distinguished guests, amongst whom you would find world-famous Olympic champions – Valeri Borzov, Vera Krepkina, Galina Prozumenshchikova, Yelena Vaitsekhovskaya, Alexander Ragulin, Nikolai Avilov, former world chess champion Mikhail Thal,

Merited Trainer of the USSR Anatoli Tarasov and many others.

The atmosphere of these finals is similar to that of the Olympics. An Olympic flame burns in a special bowl. The athletes make a vow to compete honestly, with total dedication to their team, and for the greater glory of sport.

Such mass-scale events as "Daddy, Mummy and me – a sporting family", although they may be lacking somewhat in solemnity, never fail to delight participants and spectators alike with their high spirits, amusing episodes and fun atmosphere.

The initiator and organiser of the first such events was a senior lecturer at the Latvian Institute of Physical Culture. Adolfs Grasis. He worked out a scientifically based con-

ception of P.E., maintaining that parents should always be their own children's trainers.

For the last few years he has been giving free instruction to mothers and fathers in the basics of the trainer's work.

Now these entertaining games are held not only in Riga, where they were initiated, but also in many other cities all over the country.

It goes without saying that the excitement of a tense race and lots of fun helps families grow closer together. Children rediscover their "old folks", who, as it turns out, in no way deserve this unflattering attitude.

For the last few years the Leningrad TV station has been broadcasting a programme on the "Daddy,

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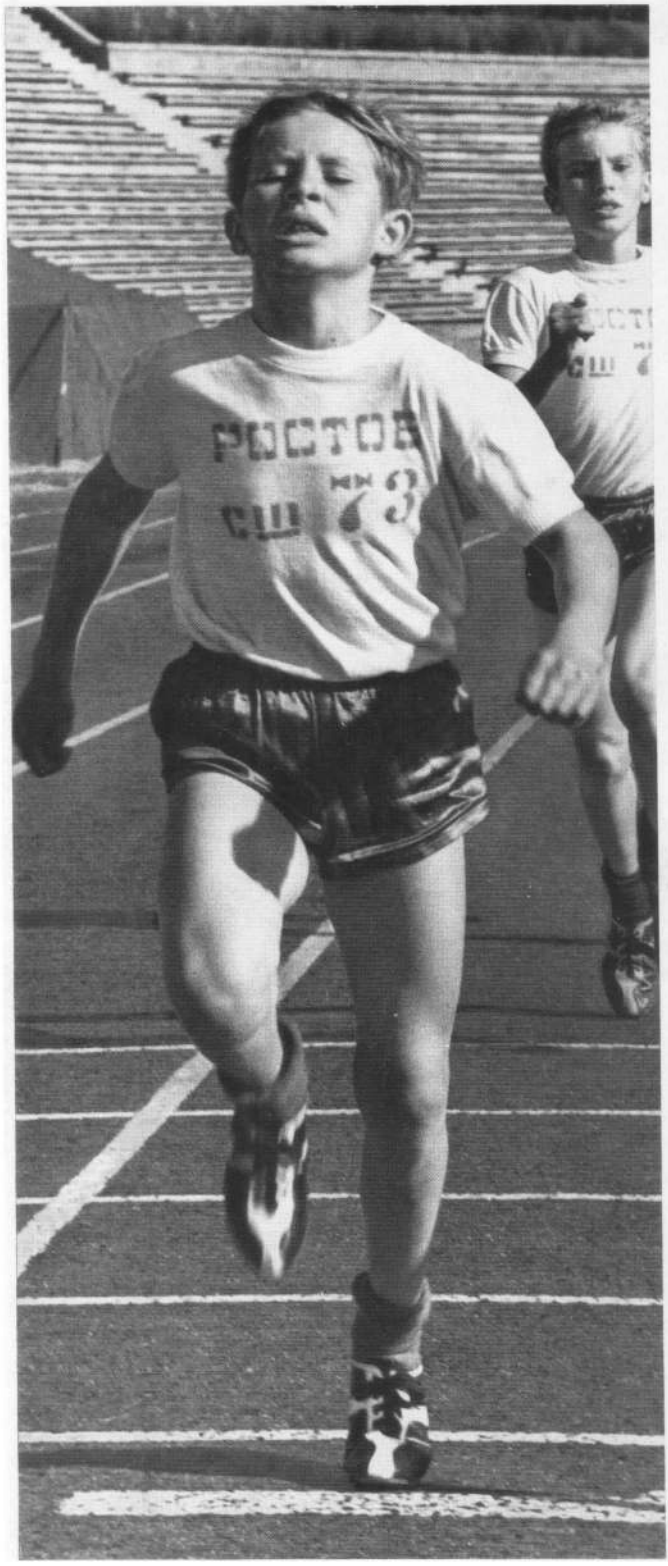
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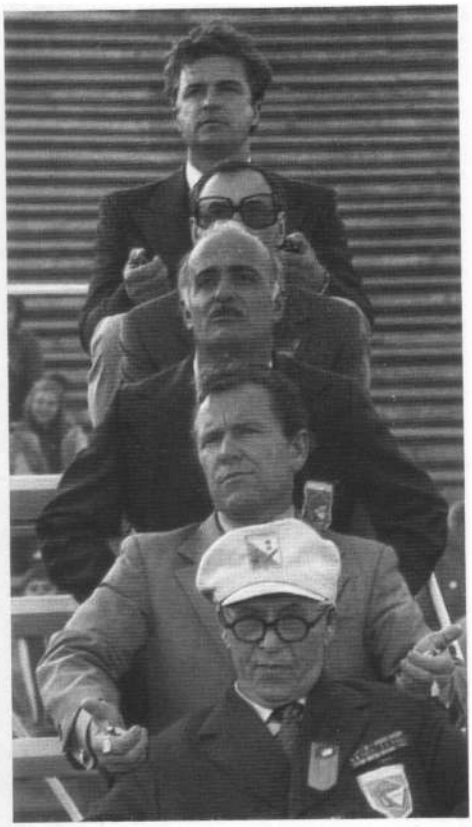
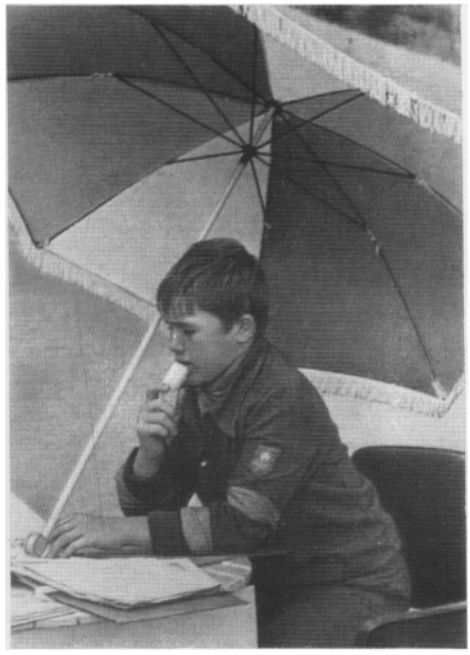


Mummy and me – a sporting family" competitions. The purpose of the programme is to bring sport into people's homes.

Each programme, and they are shown once a month, is a report of the contest, organised with a sense of humour and entertainment, between teams of parents and children.

While the programmes were still being planned some people had doubts: would it not seem as though the organiser was making fun of serious adults, of their clumsiness and their lack of skill? However the very first sequences dispelled all such doubts. Of course, some adults who long ago gave up physical exercise, have to make an extra effort to force themselves onto the track. But then, once the competition starts, it brings an enormous amount of pleasure both to participants and to spectators, to parents and children alike. Some races make the spectators laugh heartily, but at the same time genuinely surprise them. Like this one for example: a diving contest in which you get marks for boldness.



One of the fathers, loath to let down the family honour (mother had done her bit and their son had shown outstanding skill, acquired in his sports school), in the heat of competition dared, for the first time in his life, to dive from a 10-metre board – to the enormous delight of the spectators!

But one of the biggest surprises was in the archery competition in which one of the mothers, who had never held a bow in her hand before, hit the bull's-eye three times!

Every year these amusing events grow more popular and help the growth of the physical culture movement in the country.

The USSR is a nation of chess-lovers. Chess is played by millions of adults and children. It is no accident that half of the world's twelve chess world champions to date have been Soviet: Mikhail Botvinnik, Vasili Smyslov, Mikhail Thal, Tigran Petrosyan, Boris Spassky and Anatoli Karpov. . . .

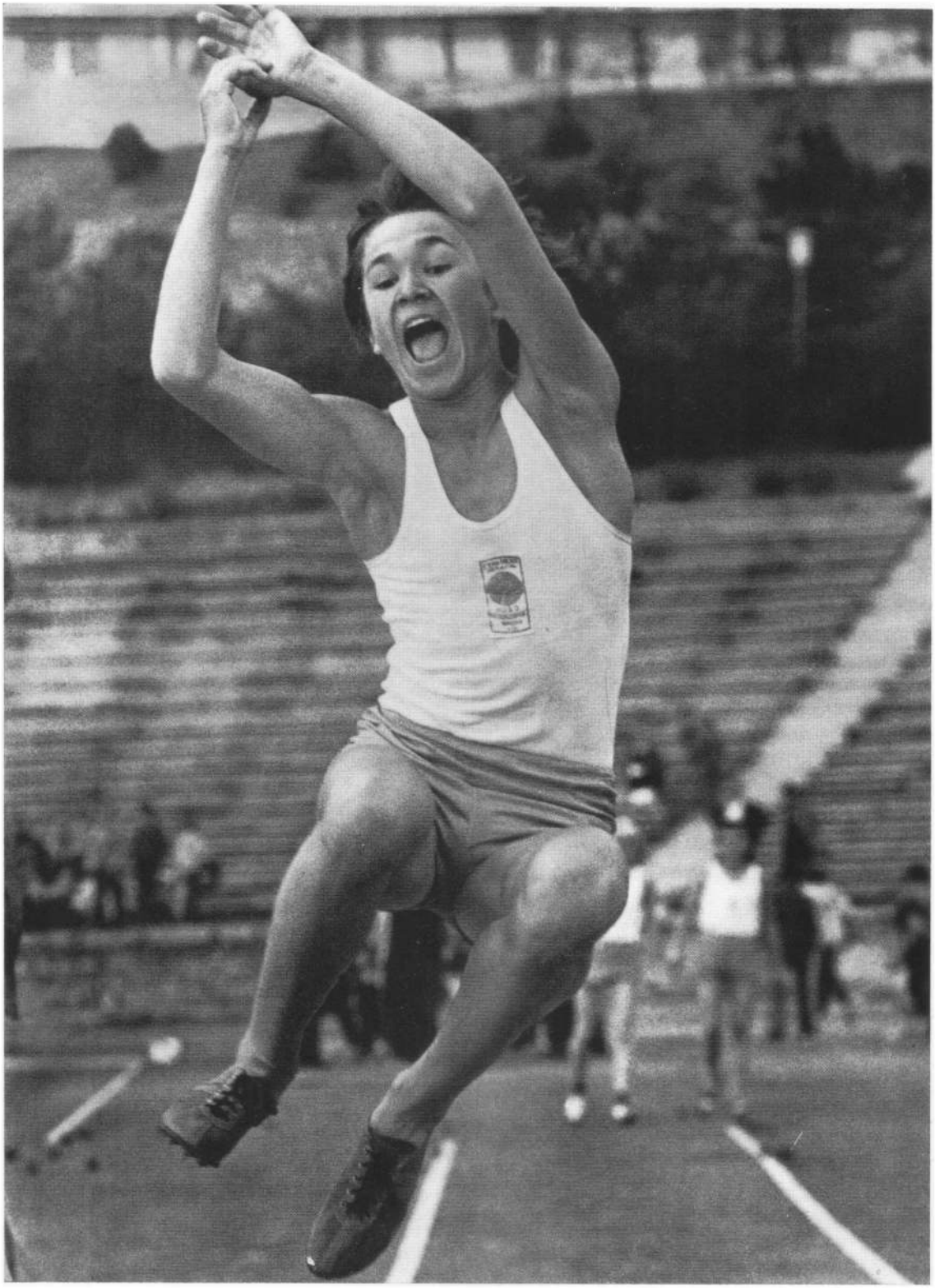
Adult chess players have their own federation and chess club, and hold regular competitions for titles at city, region and republic level as well as all-Union chess tournaments.

Children also have their own chess club, called the White Rook. It has branches all over the country, for young chess fans of all ages and standards.

The club was founded in 1968. On September 27 an announcement appeared in the paper *Pionerskaya Pravda*, or rather, not an announcement but a decree, "Decree from the Chess Kings".

This is its text:

"Attention all our faithful generals! We assign to each of you the following troops: sixteen brave pawns, four fighting bishops, four nimble knights, four long-range



rooks and two valorous queens. We order you to protect Our Majesties the Kings of Chess. The field of your forthcoming battles are the sixty-four black and white squares.

"We decree that chess battles should be fought in all clubs and the five best and most able generals – four boys and one girl – elected. All Young Pioneers from the 3rd to the 7th classes are entitled to fight for the right to the general's rank. Each group of five generals must elect their best commander, who is to be the captain of the team. Such is our regal decision."

Subsequent events proceeded in full accordance with this regal decree: chess tournaments were held in schools and Pioneer units, then between schools and teams of "generals" were formed. The best teams were chosen through a series of district, regional and territorial tournaments and in summer 1969 the first final round of the White Rook contest was held.

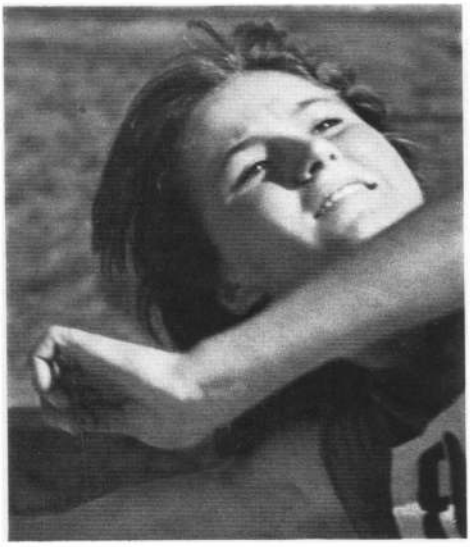
Every year the club holds this tournament. It begins at the lowest level – with Pioneer units and class competitions, and gradually rises upwards. In the lower stages each player plays for himself. But at the district level the tournaments are fought between teams. The best of these teams are invited to the finals, the winners receiving a prize put up by the White Rook.

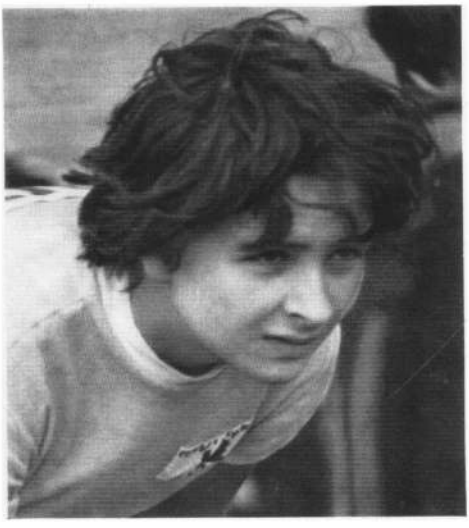
These mass children's chess tournaments make it possible to reveal the most talented children. There are already quite a number of children in the country who have a first and second class national rating, some are even candidate Masters of Sport. As a rule the best of them play in neighbourhood chess clubs and in Young Pioneer Palaces.

In 1973 a new, interesting chess tournament for young players was founded, an all-Union chess tournament between neighbourhood clubs, schools and Pioneer clubs and palaces for a prize put up by the paper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*.

This would at first glance seem nothing out of the ordinary. Such tournaments had already been held between schools, now they would be extended to Young Pioneer clubs and palaces. But the new tournament was special. Admittedly, at the initial stages, held to decide the strongest Pioneer club teams in regions and republics, all proceeded in the customary manner: boys and girls sat down at chess boards and played against one another. But at the fourth and last stage things were different. For a start, the teams which went to the finals were captained by one of the nation's leading grandmasters – a former member of that particular Pioneer club. The grandmasters played simultaneous games on six boards, taking on all the team members at once.

The results of the contests were calculated as follows. The points received by the Pioneers in their games with





the grandmasters were added to those won by the team captains in games with other teams.

When preparations were under way for the first round of finals between Pioneer clubs and palaces the view was voiced that the youngsters would not be able to put up any serious opposition to the grandmasters, and that the tournament would turn into a "slaughter of the innocents" and would be of no interest to either side. However the very first games showed that this was far from the

case. The tournament was tense and extremely interesting.

Let us quote a few results as an illustration. The first place in the first final was won by the team from the Moscow Pioneer Palace. The young Muscovites amassed 10.5 points in 30 games against grandmasters – with seven wins and seven draws. The Leningrad team scored 8.5, the Kiev team 6.5, the Riga team 5.5, the Cheliabinsk team 4 and the Tbilisi team 2. One of the participants – thirteen-year-old Muscovite Sergei Pekker – won three points in 5 games with grandmasters!

Tournaments between Pioneer palaces and clubs are

now held on a regular basis twice a year. Their popularity is growing among children and adults alike.

This is what the grandmasters themselves say about them:

Tigran Petrosyan: "It is easier to play a tournament game with any grandmaster than to take on a team of these lads."

Mikhail Thal: "I sometimes even find myself wondering: Who's putting who to the test?! Seriously though, we

grandmasters can envy the fighting spirit of our young opponents."

Anatoli Karpov: "In the course of five days I played 30 tough games. It was just as taxing as playing two major tournaments. The kids play a tremendous game of chess!"

The senior judge of the final round of the tournament between Pioneer club teams, celebrated Soviet player Mikhail Botvinnik told the children at the closing ceremony:

"The day will come when you are no longer Pioneers. It is possible that many of you will stop being keen on chess. But those of you who devote your lives to the game may

in time become grandmasters. This is essential if the glorious traditions of Soviet chess are to be upheld and multiplied."

Mikhail Botvinnik's words are starting to come true.

One participant in the first final, Valeri Chekhov, became world youth champion in 1975 and three years later his title was taken by another former participant, this time of the second final, Artur Yusupov, who at the age of 17 won the world youth championships. Yet another former participant in the final round of the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* competition, Alexander Kochiev, has fulfilled the necessary standards to win the title of grandmaster.

Thus we can truthfully state the mass-scale children's competitions, the Leather Ball, Golden Puck, Neptune, Plaited Ball, Friendship, Silver Skates and others, which involve the participation of a grand total of more than 17 million children, have become a vital element of the sports and physical culture movement in the Soviet Union.

Olympic Hopefuls

Olympic Hopefuls

Mass physical culture and sport provide a foundation for high achievements in sport. In many events and sports results are being achieved today which not so long ago were regarded as beyond the bounds of human potential.

Training methods are being improved, sports equipment is better than before and more effective methods of preparing sportsmen psychologically are being worked out, all of which promote the achievement of better and better results.

Nowadays future Olympians start their journey to the Games at a young age. Note, for example, in swimming and gymnastics the majority of the recent world and Olympic champions have been under 20. Let us try and trace their path to these titles.

In the Soviet Union this, as a rule, begins in special sports schools. There are now about five thousand of these in the Soviet Union.

On the staff of these schools there are 40 thousand qualified trainers. These are all graduates from universities and P. E. colleges and, as a rule, have a large personal experience of competition, and in certain cases impressive personal records.

It is precisely their knowledge and experience

that enables them to espy the future champions amongst their young charges. Many trainers make systematic visits to school, district and city children's competitions and other mass sporting events, at which they select the most gifted children for their special schools.

Let us take Leningrad, which has the celebrated Alexeyev athletics school, now a deservedly world-famous institution. Incidentally, this school was also the first sports school in the country, opened as part of the Zenith sports club in 1936.

In the forty years or so of its life the Alexeyev school has raised more than 15,000 young athletes.

It was a cradle to sporting fame of such world and Olympic champions and record-holders as Natalya Smirnitskaya, Galina Zybina, Tamara Tyshkevich, Nadezhda Chizhova, sisters Tamara and Irina Press, Vladimir Trusenev, Victor Baryshnikov and many others whose fame has spread far beyond the borders of the Soviet Union.

250 national records and 48 world records have been broken by Alexeyev's pupils. They have won 28 medals at world and European championships and Olympic Games.

For forty years Victor Alexeyev taught, trained and reared runners, jumpers and throwers. All sorts of boys and girls applied to him, and he accepted them all. "There is no such thing as a weedy child who cannot become strong and handsome" – that was his motto.

Alexeyev used to say: "Training is a process of assembly. One must unite physical fitness, an indomitable will to win and self-confidence into a single whole."

He was able to do this. Not only was he able to prepare his athletes physically for a record achievement. He also knew how to strengthen their confidence in themselves and in their forthcoming undertaking.

For his personal achievement Victor Alexeyev won the title of Merited Master of Sport of the USSR. And for his pedagogical services, his rearing of top-class athletes he was the first person in the nation to be awarded the title of Merited Trainer of the USSR. Alexeyev is now no longer alive, but his school continues to thrive.

Many well-known Soviet physical educationalists and sports personalities have devoted their lives to passing on their sporting experience to the younger generation. Many times world and Olympic champion Victor Chukarin has his own gymnastics school. Albert Azaryan has a gymnastics school and boxer Vladimir Engibaryan a boxing school in Armenia, former world champion in the modern pentathlon Igor Novikov runs a school for young pentathletes in Yerevan. Algirdas Šocikas – twice European boxing champion – is working in his native Lithuania with young boxers. We could cite plenty of similar examples.

But, as we have already stated, the most numerous

sports schools are those that are part of the general education network. Let us take a look at one of them – the Volgograd district sports school in Moscow, which specialises in skiing.

More than 300 children attend this school, from little school-beginners coming to school escorted by their grannies to lanky teenagers, with enormous sports bags slung across their shoulders. Classes are held in groups divided according to age. The principles of educating the young sportsmen were described for us by one of the trainers, Alexander Yeryomin.

"Our school is well-known in the neighbourhood and is popular with the children. It is situated in a big park, in an old, formerly private house and has all the necessary apparatus and equipment. The school is directed by an experienced teacher with special qualifications for the job, former Olympic skiing champion Radya Yeroshina. She is assisted by about twenty trainers, most of whom also have special sports education.

"The school specialises in skiing, but the children also do other sports: track-and-field, crosscountry, swimming, football, rowing. But we put our emphasis on skiing, and by the end of the course children become pretty competent skiers.

"Admittedly their talent for the sport is not immediately apparent. Skiing requires a lot of hard work, and you will only make progress as a skier after years of systematic training.

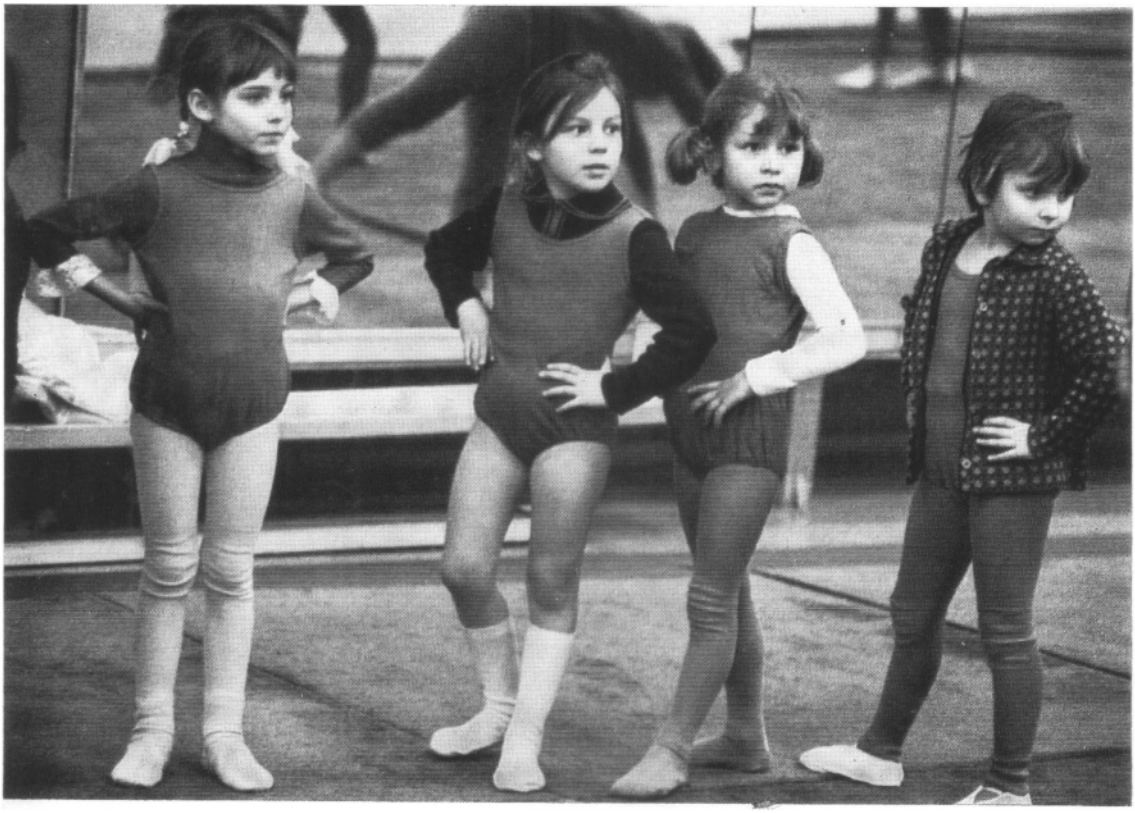
"I work with the beginners. There are thirty ten-year-olds in my group, and it's as yet impossible to say what any of them will one day be capable of.

"At the age of ten boys like to imitate one another: in their behaviour, their conversation, even in the way they dress. They easily fall under the influence of a leader, adopting both his good and his bad points. And the trainer has to solve problems of upbringing more often than those of sport.

"Once I have got to know my beginners, and established contact with them I concentrate on developing their attitude to nature, their understanding of it. For a child who is completely unmoved by nature will never much enjoy skiing. Everything around him will just be a blank wilderness. But if he can appreciate the beauty of the forest on a sunny winter morning, or how nature is renewed by every fresh snowfall, how it can change before your very eyes then I regard him as a naturally gifted skier.

"Of course this is not an entry requirement, but it is a significant factor. As a trainer I am obliged to check how well-built the lads are, their height-weight ratio, their mobility. . . .

"But I don't miss the chance to find out what their interests are, how they cope with their lessons. We don't



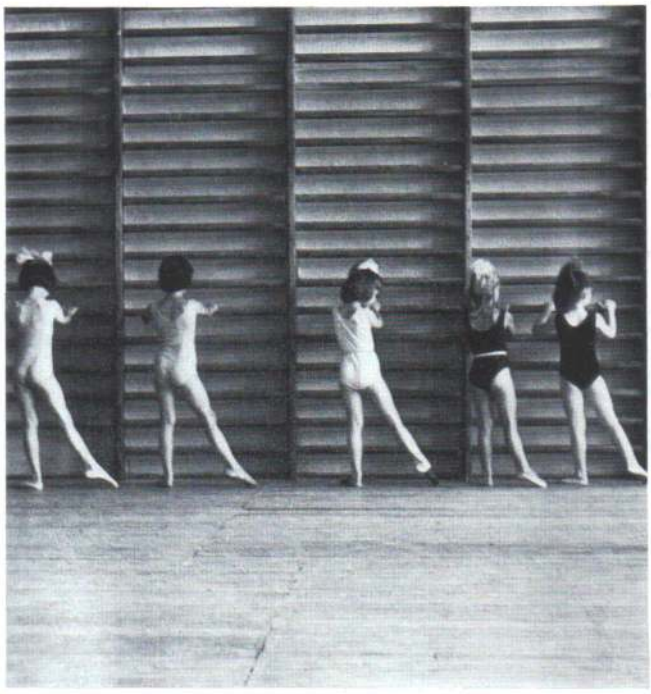
admit slackers to training sessions. The idea behind this is not only that education comes before sport for all children, but that an industrious and disciplined child, who has learnt to do his lessons well and in good time, and to observe the regime of the school day, has a much better chance of making progress in sport too. These things are interconnected."

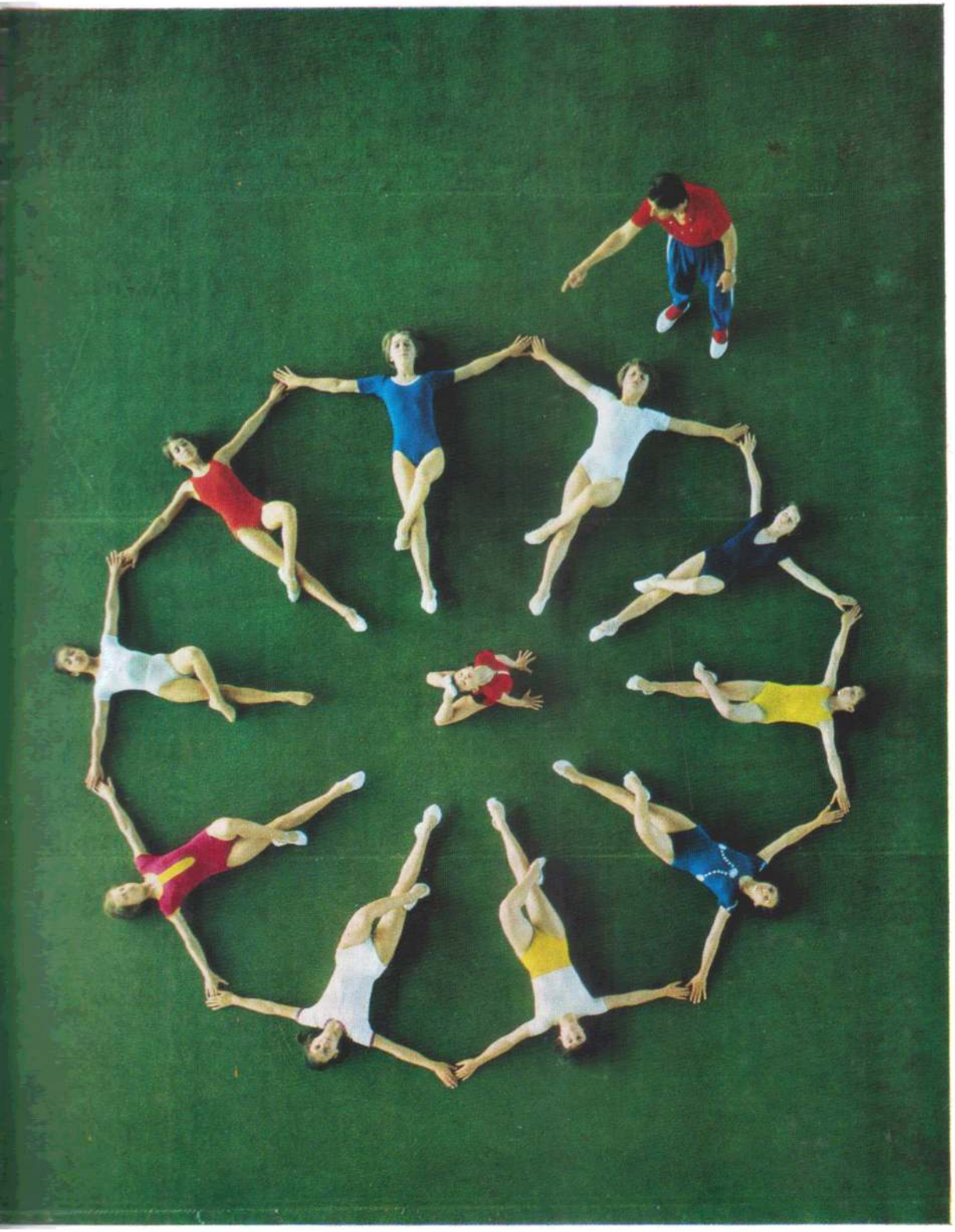
Children come to classes in this and other sports schools after their school day in an ordinary school. At first they train two or three times a week and as their results improve or before a big race this is stepped up to four or five times.

Good work and behaviour in their ordinary schools are obligatory conditions for children's attendance of classes in sports school.

Attendance of sports schools and use of all sports equipment are free.

Recent years have seen a reorganisation of sports schools. Many of them have started specialising in one or two, and more rarely, three sports. Now these schools are accordingly called specialised sports schools. Their advantage is obvious: the possibility appeared of setting up more modern facilities in schools. The Volgograd district school, for example, was recently granted a





new sports hall for indoor training in inclement weather. The best trainers and sports experts are concentrated in these schools.

Today the specialised gymnastics schools are universally renowned – the schools of Victor Khomutov, Vikenty Dmitriyev, Dmitry Knysh in Byelorussia which have reared Olympic champions Larisa Petrik, Antonina Koshel and Olga Korbut, the gymnastics school run by Vladislav Rastorotsky in Rostov-on-Don, which produced the celebrated Lyudmila Turishcheva and new rising star

Natalya Shaposhnikova, the Uzbek school, which reared world champion Nelli Kim, and the Moscow school which gave us Yelena Mukhina, and the Leninsk-Kuznetsky school run by the Mametiev husband and wife team, which reared World Cup holder Maria Filatova.

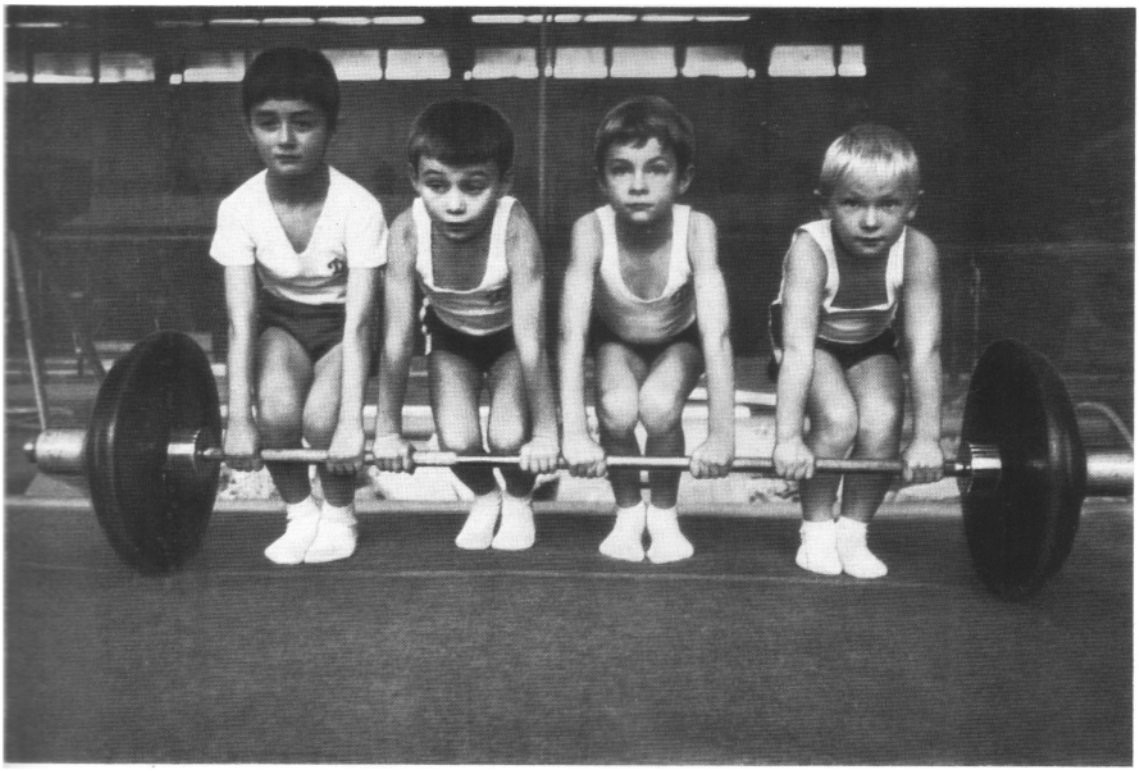
There are specialised gymnastics schools in other cities too, and not only the older and bigger cities either, but also in such new settlements as Shevchenko on the Mangyshlak peninsula, or Tynda, township of constructors of the Baikal-Amur Railway.

A great favourite with girls is callisthenics. Special callisthenics schools have been opened in many towns. They have already achieved world-wide acclaim, bringing to the

limelight such champions as Irina Deryugina (Kiev), Galima Shugurova (Sverdlovsk), Natalya Krasheninnikova (Krasnodar), Alla Zasukhina (Astrakhan). A similar fame no doubt awaits the other schools too.

There is an interesting school for young downhill skiers in Yuzhnosakhalinsk, which numbers about 240 boys and girls.

A similar school has been opened in Tashtagol, at the south of the Kuzbas, which has slalom, giant slalom and

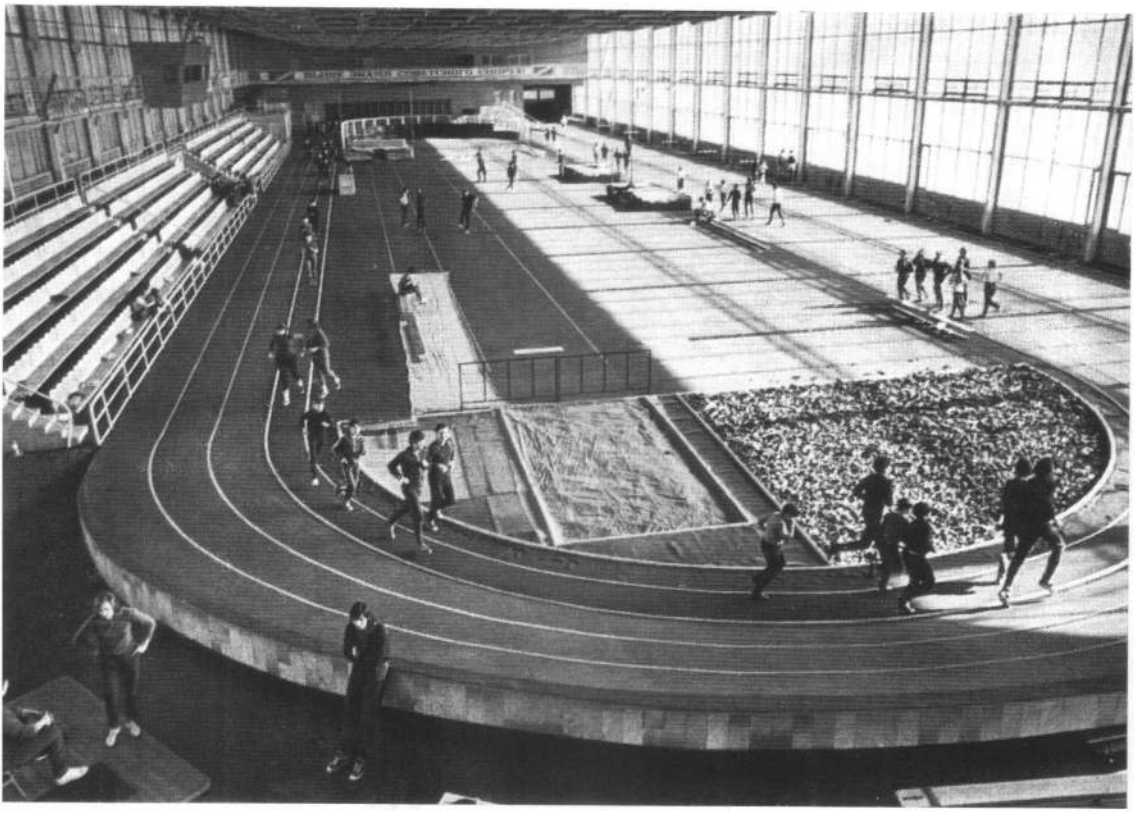


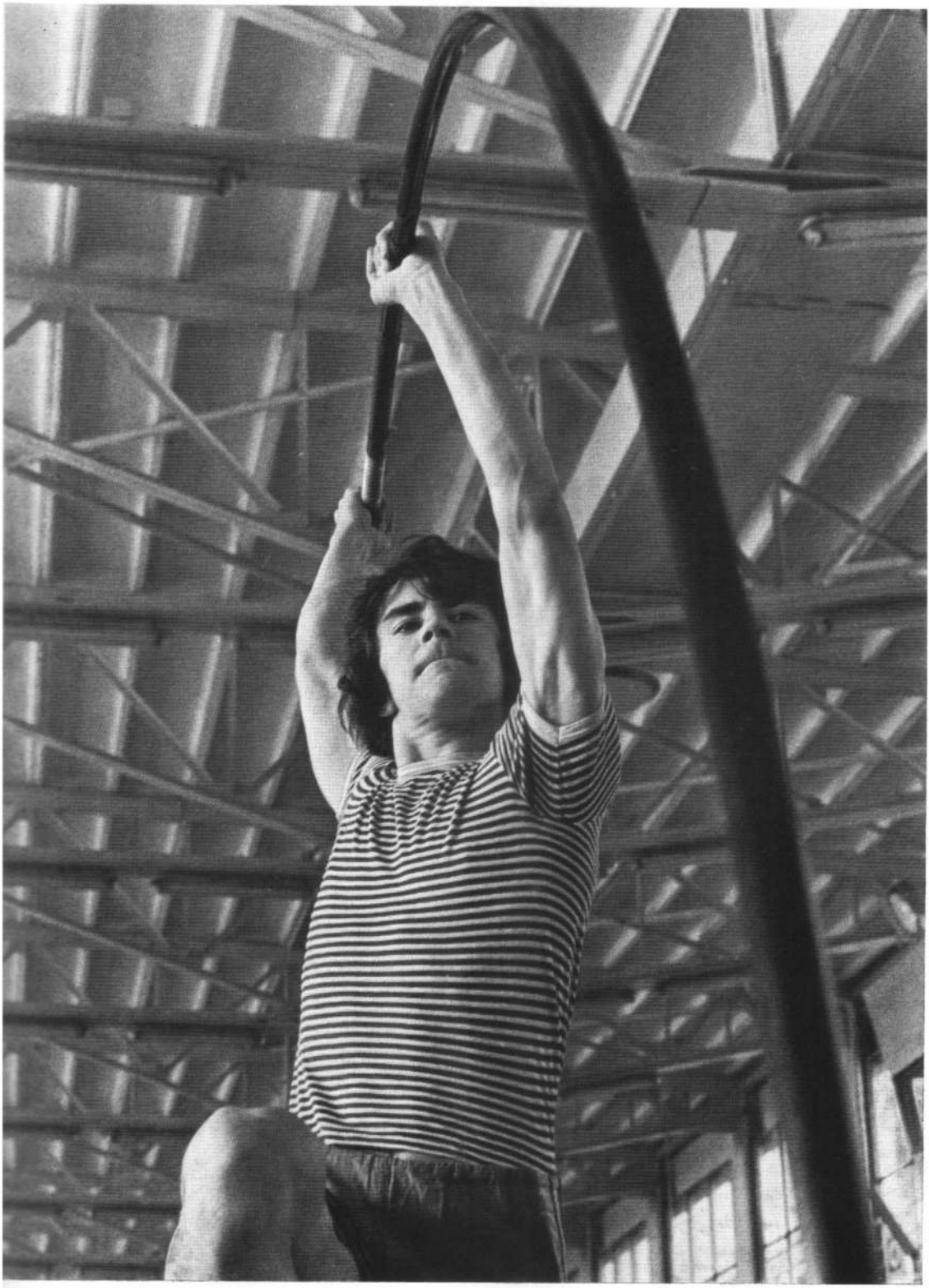
parallel slalom courses laid down the side of a big mountain.

The children at these schools are frequent prize-winners at competitions run between the specialised sports schools.

There is also an excellent school for beginner skiers in the young city of Bratsk. They train on the ski-runs of Mount Pikhtovaya. The runs are 800 and 1,000 metres in length, and excellent facilities have been provided for the young athletes – a two-storey centre and a T-bar lift.

Similar schools have also been opened in the traditional ski centres in the Urals, the Caucasus, the Carpathians, in Leningrad (Kavgolovo) and elsewhere.





HEAD

The majority of sports schools now also have their own out-of-town centres – either permanent bases or tent camps, equipped with all they need. The children go to these camps together with their trainers and teachers. The fee is the same as in ordinary Pioneer camps, and they train just as hard as during term-time.

As an example we can take the camp where children from the Smena (Young Generation) specialised football school in Leningrad spend their summer.

The camp is situated in a suburb of Leningrad, in an old building in the outskirts of Pavlovsk which stands in a huge park. Once in this park members of the tsar's family spent their leisure, but now both palace and park have been given over to the children of Leningrad workers.

The boys from this specialised football school spend about a month in the camp during the summer holidays. In this month they train, study the theory of football and play in the city and regional youth championships.

But naturally enough they do not live by football alone. They are taken on excursions into the town of Pavlovsk, work in the park, tending flowers in the greenhouses and helping farmers on neighbouring collective farms to bring in the harvest.

Lots of fun is had at these camps, with evenings by the Pioneer campfire, talent contests and concerts. Sports meets are held in other sports than football, too. The boys pit their forces against one another in swimming, canoeing, volleyball and basketball. They go on hikes and meet famous visitors. In other words, it is a camp like any other. Only pride of place is taken by football.

Thousands of boys and girls belong to the various sports sections of the Pioneer stadium in Kharkov.

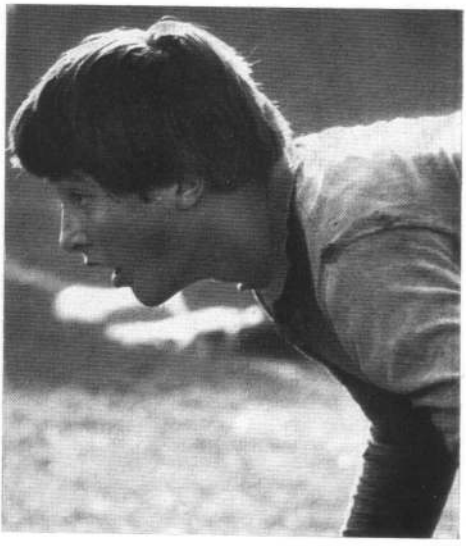
In 1977 the stadium's territory was enhanced by the addition of an indoor swimming pool, which, to be more precise, is three swimming pools under one roof: the main pool, 25 metres, with six lanes, a slightly smaller warm-up pool, and a shallow "kiddies' pool" for the little ones.

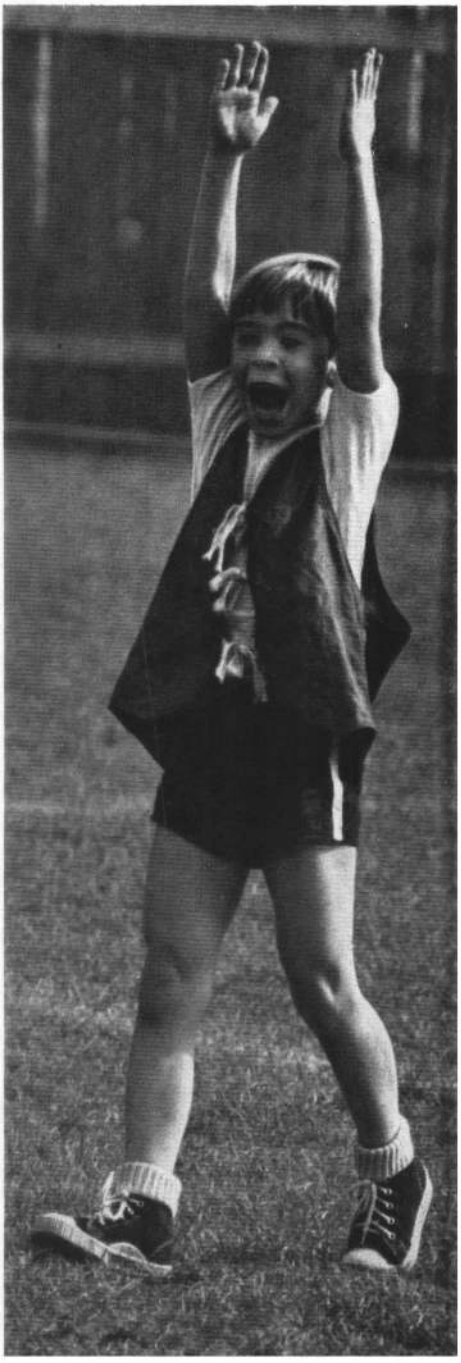
The main hall's comfortable stands seat 400 spectators, and there are special glassed-in cabins for the judges and commentators. The warm-up hall has a trampoline and other auxiliary apparatuses.

For the convenience of young swimmers there is a balcony solarium, where they can rest and sun-bathe after competitions and training, a cloakroom, shower-rooms and medical and training rooms.

All major cities have similar facilities for their children.

Visitors to Moscow are always shown as one of the city's sights the Pioneer Palace on Lenin Hills. Its territory occupies more than 54 hectares, with a winter garden, theatre, concert hall, art studios and workshops, and a large sports complex, containing sports halls, a stadium and a swimming pool. More than 18 thousand children belong to the Pioneer Palace's various sections. The state





allocates more than 1.5 million roubles yearly to the Palace's needs.

The Palace's alumni have already achieved notable successes. In the Montreal Olympics Marina Koshevaya, trained by Lev Prozorov, took a gold medal in swimming. Handball player Yuri Kidyayev was accepted for the Central Army Sports Club, won the USSR championship and a gold medal in Montreal.

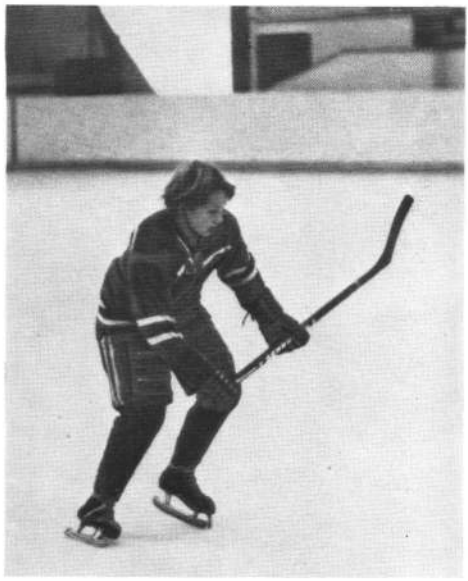
Former member of the chess section Anna Akhsharumova became USSR champion defeating even the celebrated Nonna Gaprindashvili. Fellow chess wizard Valeri Chekhov – world youth champion – also learnt his chess at the Pioneer Palace and Artur Yusupov – 1977 world champion – to this day belongs to the Palace's chess section.

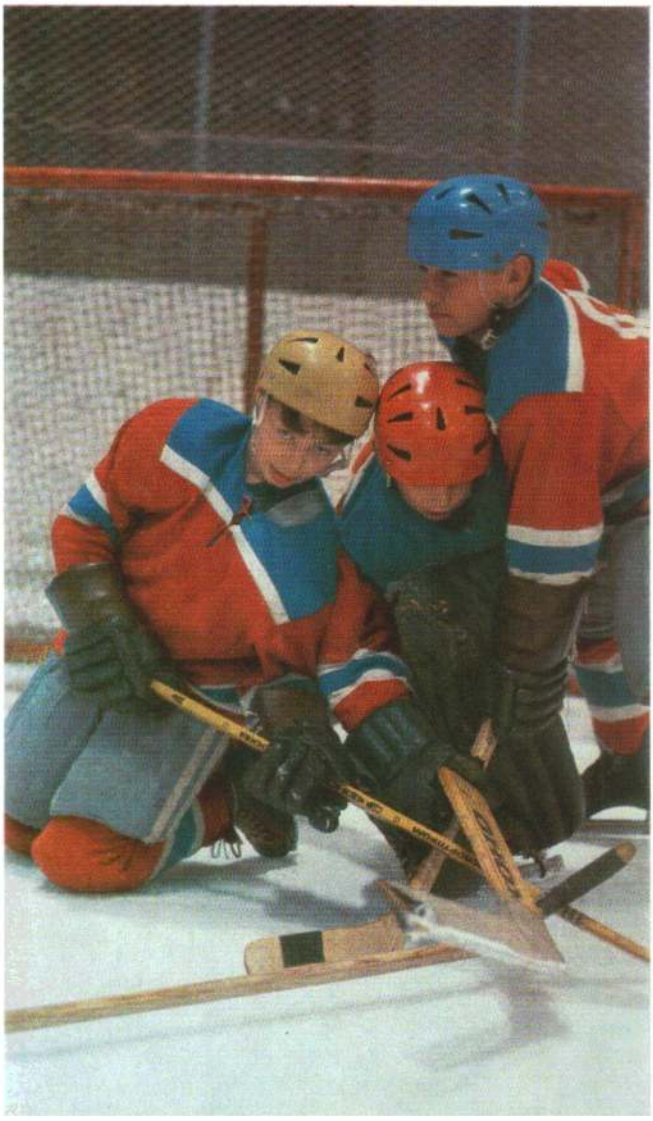
We met one of the Palace's new members, 6th class schoolboy Igor Donchenko, and his parents at a gymnastics tournament. His mother Lydia Donchenko, who is a doctor of medicine, dreamed of her son becoming a musician. The lad had some musical talent, but absolutely no attraction to music. You can take a horse to water, but you can't make it drink, and Igor dreaded his music lessons. He even started to find his lessons at school a drag, his handwriting degenerated, and his sums got worse. The doctors, his mother included, saw that the boy was developing apathy and listlessness from having to study something he didn't like. No medicine or vitamins would help here. A more drastic course of action had to be found.

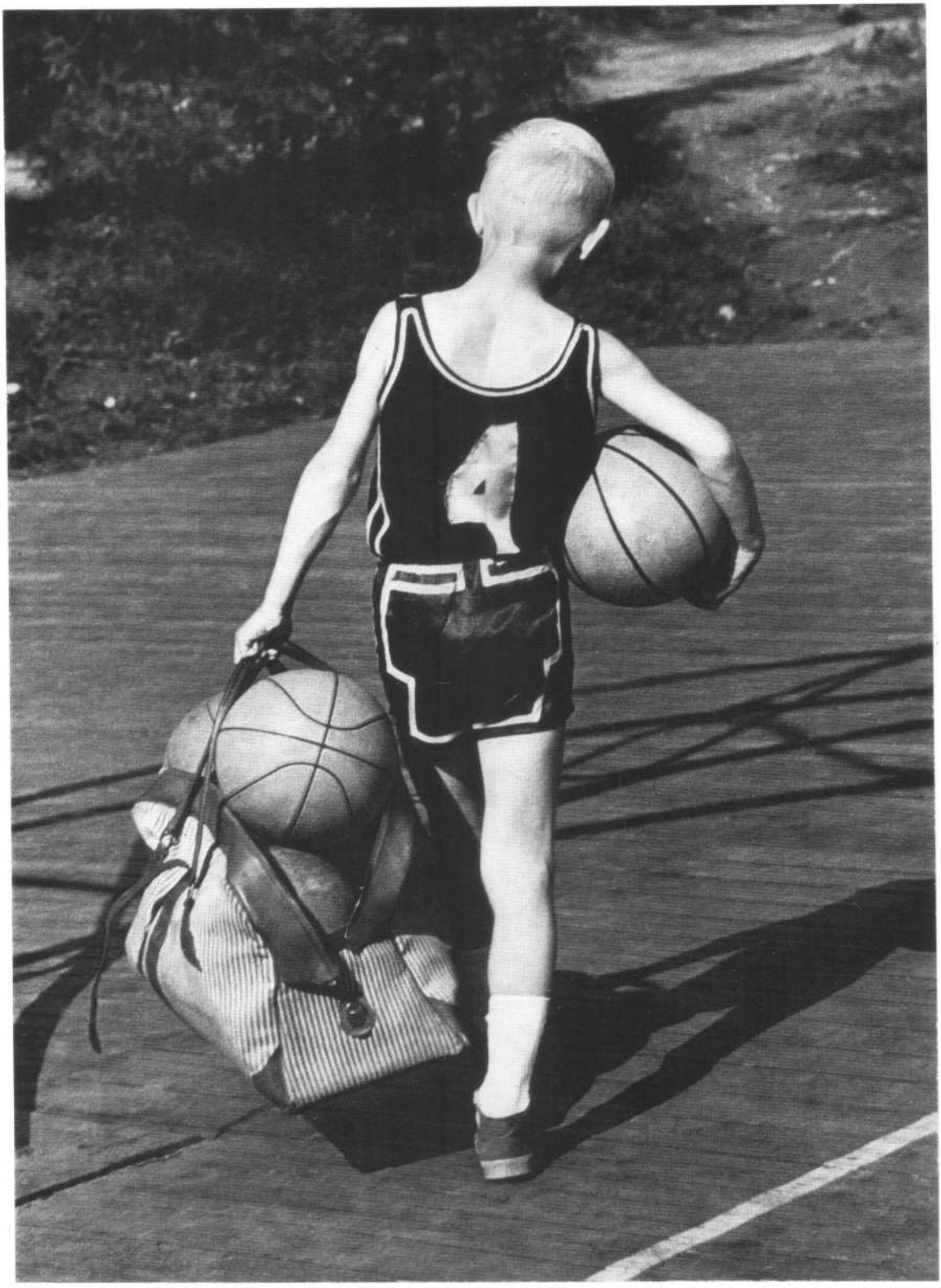
Ever since babyhood Igor had been as skinny as a spider. Fragile and shy, spoilt by his parents like all only children, at the age of 10 he still could not ski or skate. His new skates lay around unused and his ice-hockey stick gathered dust in a corner of his room, while the only sport he enjoyed was watching ice-hockey or football on the television. With eager application he would compile tables of all the hockey championships, including every possible team in them, but alas, not one of these teams had a place in it for him. The local boys always managed to find a pretext not to include him in their football or ice-hockey games. But he was happy just to run and fetch the ball, and help the line judges, so as to be on the sports ground.

One Sunday he and his father went for a walk on Lenin Hills. On their way up the escalator they were surrounded by gangs of rosy-cheeked small boys, all about Igor's age, with their caps cocked on the sides and their coats wide open. Igor was wearing a thick fur hat and a heavy, fur-lined coat. The other boys mocked him: "Hey, do you think you're going training in that gear? They don't let in people like you."

Igor cringed with embarrassment, but his father asked them with friendly interest: "Are you lads from the sports sections in the Pioneer Palace? I wonder if you could tell us how you join."







They all left the metro station together and went into the sports hall.

"Look, we've brought a new boy, completely useless, but his dad says he'll try hard," announced one of the boys pushing Igor forward to the trainer.

"How useless he may be is for us to decide," said the trainer, "but by the look of him I'd say he could be tried out at gymnastics."

She sat at the piano and played a short tune.

"Can you hum it?" she asked the boy.

"Here we go, just like in music school," thought Igor. "Scales, finger exercises. No, I won't hum it." And he emitted some indeterminate noises. All the boys around him hooted with laughter.

"Pity, you haven't got a musical ear. That's a great disadvantage for a gymnast. Well, seeing as you've come to us and want to take up some sport in the Pioneer Palace we'll put you in the general fitness section."

Thus Igor started going to the Pioneer Palace. In the autumn he and the other boys ran crosscountries – up and down dozens of hills, jumping across ditches and streams. . . . He played football, playing back, forward, even goalie. He went swimming with other boys, after trying hard to think of an excuse, as he was afraid to be the only one who couldn't swim.

But he had friends in adversity, it turned out. Holding each others' hands they nervously tiptoed into the pool. After a few lessons they happily jumped in off starting blocks and plunged underwater like fish. In other words, it turned out that they could all swim, and had only been prevented from trying by their fear of the water.

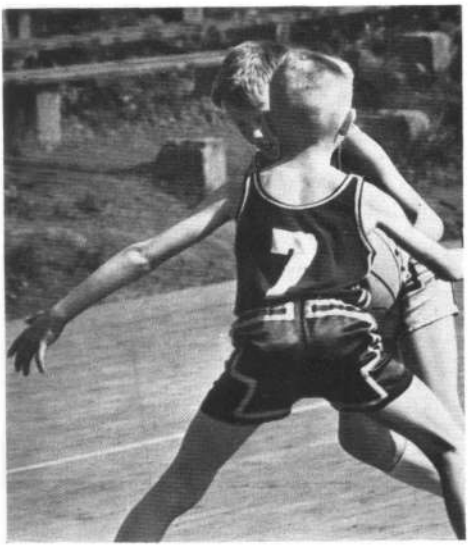
One day the lads were taken into the gymnastics hall. It was exactly as Igor had remembered it on his first visit to the Pioneer Palace: the same low bars and the same black leather horse and – the same piano. And – oh dear – the very same teacher, before whom he had made a fool of himself by deceiving her during his test. But now she merely gave them all an attentive look and, probably without recognising Igor, asked: "Can any of you play something for us on the piano, while I show you the new set of exercises you'll have to do for your GTO standard?"

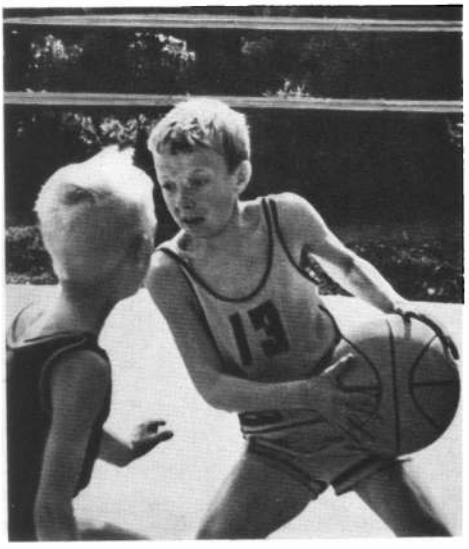
For a fraction of a second Igor hesitated: he was very keen to make good his bad mark with the teacher, and at the same time to show his friends what he was capable of. He stepped forward and raised his hand.

"You of all people?" the trainer's eyes sparkled with surprise. "Can you play?"

Igor felt most uncomfortable. The trainer had recognised him after all, and now everyone would know how he had cheated. But she said nothing, and after a brief pause asked him to sit down at the piano and play a cheerful march.

The boys raced around the gym, doing exercises and





somersaults on the mat and Igor played on and on. From time to time he caught the trainer's approving look, and saw her nod to him in gratitude.

And when the class was over she shook his hand as if he were a grown-up and said:

"If you want to take up gymnastics you can come along any day."

Now Igor is already a veteran, with the first category rating in gymnastics. He takes part in many competitions, and has taken up his music again. Incidentally he also studies music in the Pioneer Palace. . . .

What small boy does not dream of the sea, of racing across the waves under canvas? Here these dreams can easily be made to come true, since sailing is very popular in the country.

Like in all sports the intake in sailing becomes younger every year. Ten-year-olds now go out sailing in small dinghies. Admittedly the Optimist and Cadet class centre-boarders in which they sail have extra stability and simplified steering, but in all other respects they are the same as boats used by adults. The first article of the yachtsman's faith is to be fit, to be able to swim and to know the navigation rules and technique of handling a boat.

Now every yachtsclub has children's sections and in addition there are specialised sailing schools. One such is at the Kiev Pioneer Palace, whose patron is twice Olympic champion Valentin Mankin, and another in Leningrad, headed by Merited Master of Sport Ivan Matveyev. Children's sailing schools have been organised in Moscow by the Armed Forces Yachtsclub and by the Trud (Labour) and Vodnik (Water Transport Worker) trade-union associations.

Moscow's water area is limited, made up by artificial reservoirs, but many famous yachtsmen have learnt their skills here nevertheless.

After all, you have to be especially skilled to catch a wind on these tiny little ponds and to manoeuvre your craft about without running aground on the bank or colliding with your friends, all the while tacking and going about according to the rules. Then the spectators at these competitions are most knowledgeable and the judges awe-inspiring: none of Moscow's former and present yachtsmen ever turns down an opportunity to watch the new generation of sailors and assess their skill.

By now practically all the "adult" sports schools and voluntary sports societies have their own children's sports schools.

Many well-known Masters of Sport, who compete for these societies and clubs, regard it as their duty to help raise worthy successors in the younger generation and devote long hours to working with young athletes.

Almost all football and hockey clubs in the top and first league have their own specialised football and hockey

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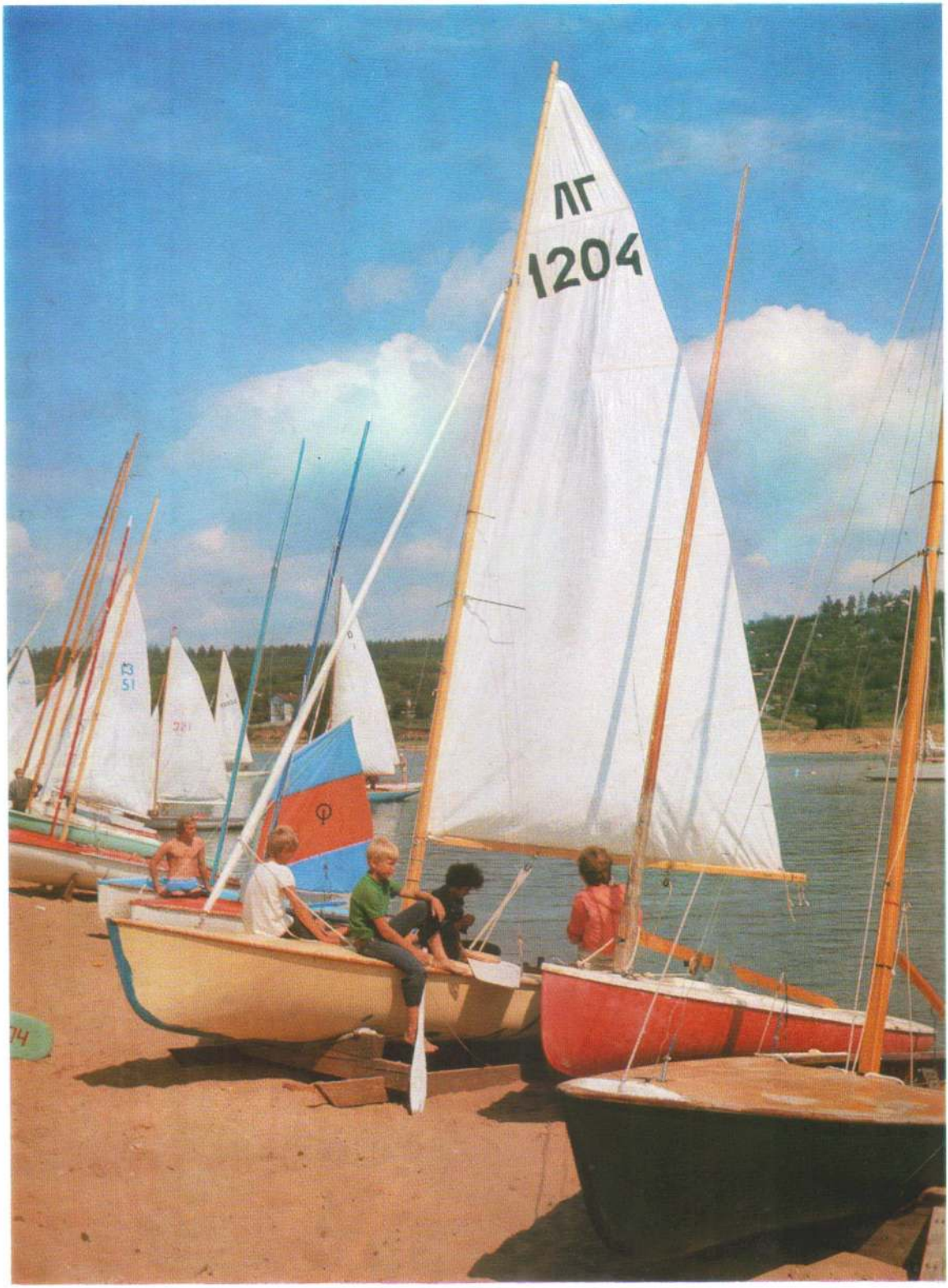
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schools. The team captains and trainers believe that a club's strength is to be found not only in the technical and tactical skill of its players, but also in the reserves it has at its disposal.

An excellent football school has been opened under the aegis of Kiev Dynamo, many times winner of the USSR championship. Several young footballers who attended this school have earned the title of world youth champions.

There are excellent football schools in Moscow, Minsk, Tbilisi, Leningrad, Gorky, Riga and many other towns. They are attended by thousands of young footballers.

The trampolinists' school in Krasnodar has won far-reaching fame, rearing a number of national and international champions. Yevgeni Yanes and Yevgeni Yakovenko have won the European and world titles, and Yanes's sister Tatyana brought back a silver medal from the European championship in Scotland, while his second sister Natasha has become the Kuban area's first Master of Sport in trampolining.

The school is directed by Master of Sport Vitali Dubko.

The young boxers' school in Donetsk is also well-known in our country. It was set up under the aegis of the Spartacus Palace of Sport and is now more than ten years old. Its alumni are competing successfully in many tournaments at national and international level. Thirty of them are now Masters of Sport, 210 candidate Masters and holders of first category ratings. It was from this school that V. Zasypko, twice European champion and Merited Master of Sport, began his sporting career. The school is directed by Merited Trainer of the USSR Yu. Bukman. It is now attended by 450 young boxers.

Bobsleighing is perhaps the youngest sport in the Soviet Union. The first bobsleigh clubs appeared only recently. The Soviet bobsleigh team has not yet competed in the Olympics and only once in the world championships, and their debut was not bad at all – several of our riders won

medals, but the big prizes are still ahead. The sport's guarantee of success is the great interest taken in it by children and adults.

Bobsleigh courses are being built in many towns and sports schools opened. The first course was in the city of Bratsk. It is symbolic that the nation's youngest sport should receive its first permanent home in one of our youngest cities.

The course was built by the same construction workers who built the famous Bratsk hydroelectric power station.

Our best bobsleigh riders train on the Bratsk course, and major competitions are held here.

The nation's first specialised bobsleigh school was also set up in Bratsk.

There are specialised skating schools in Cheliabinsk, Moscow, Kirov, Gorky and other skating centres. The children can skate all the year round – in winter on the city's excellent rinks, and in summer on tarmac tracks using special roller-skates.

The Mogilev specialised water-polo school has earned itself a fine reputation. The young players from this school have won the republic's championships several times, and successfully compete in national tournaments.

A popular centre for young Muscovites is the ice-hockey school at the Central Army Sports Club, whose ice-hockey team have won the national title many times and are present holders of the European Champions' Cup.

The selection of new boys for this school is traditionally run by famous ice-hockey stars, world, Olympic and national champions whose names are known all over the world – Anatoli Firsov, Victor Kuzkin, Alexander Ragulin, Vladimir Petrov, Boris Mikhailov and Vladislav Tretyak.

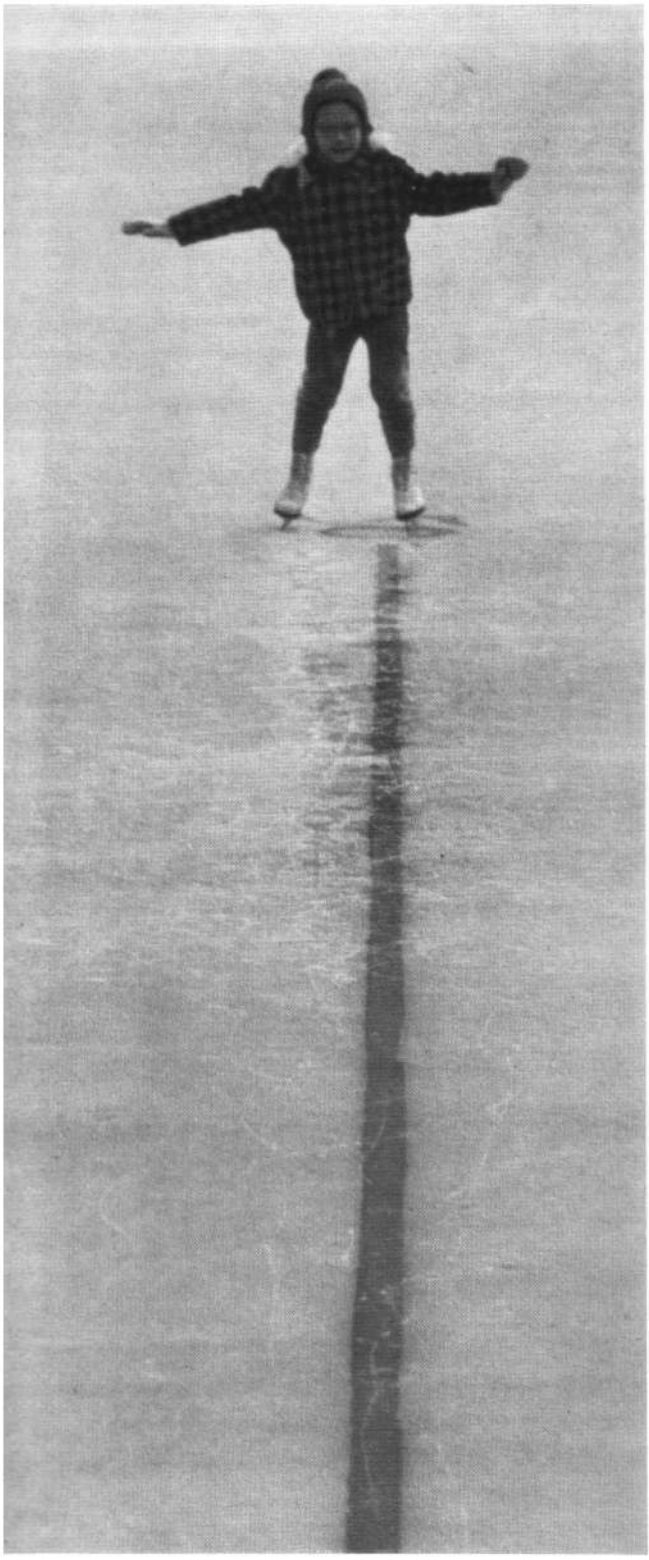
Entrance to this school is by exam, and this exam is a cause of great anxiety to the young hopefuls.

But it is not only the applicants who feel anxious: the ice-hockey stars are also worried about who they choose for the school, for it is up to them to ensure that the glorious tradition of Soviet ice-hockey is continued.

The exam takes place on the ice: the boys skate up and down, dribble the puck, pass, tackle, strike for goal. . . .

They are watched by trainers and experienced players. Only those that look very promising will be chosen. The lucky ones are in the seventh heaven, while those that do not make it . . . are reduced to tears.

Classes in the school are tough. One training session after another. But the youngsters do not give way under the strain. They are determined to grow up like their idols.



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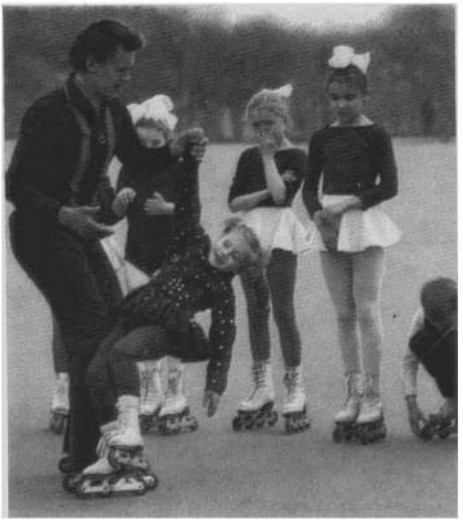


Conclusion

The cream of the nation's young sportsmen gather for the finals of the All-Union Schools Spartakiad. In the last few years, as we move towards the Olympics, these have been held under the motto: "There are Olympians in our midst!"

In fact the school's spartakiad is a sort of miniature Olympics, including the same sports as in the Olympics, the same individual scoring, with no official team competition.

Like the mountain brooks of a major river the Spartakiad actually "rises" long before its finals – in villages and towns, in school stadiums, suburban sports halls, swimming pools and rifle ranges. They begin by setting up school teams from which district, city, regional and republic teams are selected. The finals are contested by teams of all the Union republics.

Each of these events, even those at the early stage, are a great festivity for our children, and each of them produce results which make their way into the record books. Many a famous sportsman of today first came to the public's notice at these children's spartakiads.

Sports lovers will no doubt remember the celebrated Press sisters, Irina and Tamara, who smashed records in the shot, discus and pentathlon. Their road to sporting glory began in a small school in distant, hot Samarkand. In the sixties the world was stunned by the phenomenal high-jumping of Valeri Brumel, world record holder and Olympic champion. He too was victor of the schools spartakiad in his day. The gymnastics stars of Olga Korbut, Lyudmila Turishcheva, and Maria Filatova first dazzled the public eye at these competitions. As a schoolboy double Olympic champion Valeri Borzov sprinted for the Ukraine.

Such future stars as Galina Prozumenshchikova and Marina Koshevaya (swimming), Marina Cherkasova and Sergei Shakhrai (figure skating), Maia Cheburdanidze and Anatoli Karpov (chess), Oleg Blokhin (football) and many others gained their first skills and experience in specialised sports schools.

The system of sports facilities in our country, as the reader has been able to judge for himself, is so arranged that in any school or neighbourhood, Pioneer or holiday camp no single sporting talent would go undetected. The gifted boy or girl will without fail be spotted by a P.E. teacher or trainer, or P.E. instructor seconded to the school from a local enterprise. And he will at once draw the child into the world of sport, have a word with his parents and persuade them of the necessity for their child to do sport.

After this the child will be attended to in the sports section or school by specialists, teachers and doctors, conducting systematic medical checks on the growth of his sports results.

The family itself is in no way inconvenienced by their child's playing sport, for all sports centres, use of equipment and even kit is made available to children free of charge. Travel to competitions, accommodation in other towns and food are also all free.

P.E. is not only compulsory in Soviet schools, colleges and all educational institutions, it accompanies our citizens throughout their lives. At any age, from early childhood to advanced maturity facilities are provided for people not only to do sport under the supervision of experts, but also to take part in competitions and even national championships in the GTO complex.

The phenomenon of the schoolchild champion is becoming commonplace nowadays, with sport growing ever younger. But even if a boy or girl win sporting glory after they have left school it is still true that they began their road to success in the children's sports clubs and schools, Pioneer palaces and neighbourhood sections.

Amongst schoolchildren who have won the high distinction of national titles and recordholders of the USSR we can mention the swimmer Yulia Bogdanova, the gymnast Maria Filatova, the figure skater Yelena Vodorezova, the athletes Maria Serkova and Vladimir Yashchenko. Yashchenko's name is now known to sports lovers all over the world. He is the new world record holder in the high jump.

His story begins in a sports school in the village of Khortitsa, near Zaporozhye. This school has no tartan track or high-jump pit with a paralon surface. But Khortitsa has nice green meadows and steep paths. Instead of special training apparatus boys use the branches of trees, jumping to touch them with their hands, heads or feet. Days end with songs at the campfire, and a good night's sleep in the open.

The boys' favourite exercise is diving into the river Dnieper from a 12-metre-high bank.

In this sports school the boys not only learn the secrets of sporting skill, they are also taught to love nature, to know the value of friendship and to help out their fellows in times of need. All the sports grounds in this school were created by the boys themselves under the guidance of their trainer Vasili Telegin.

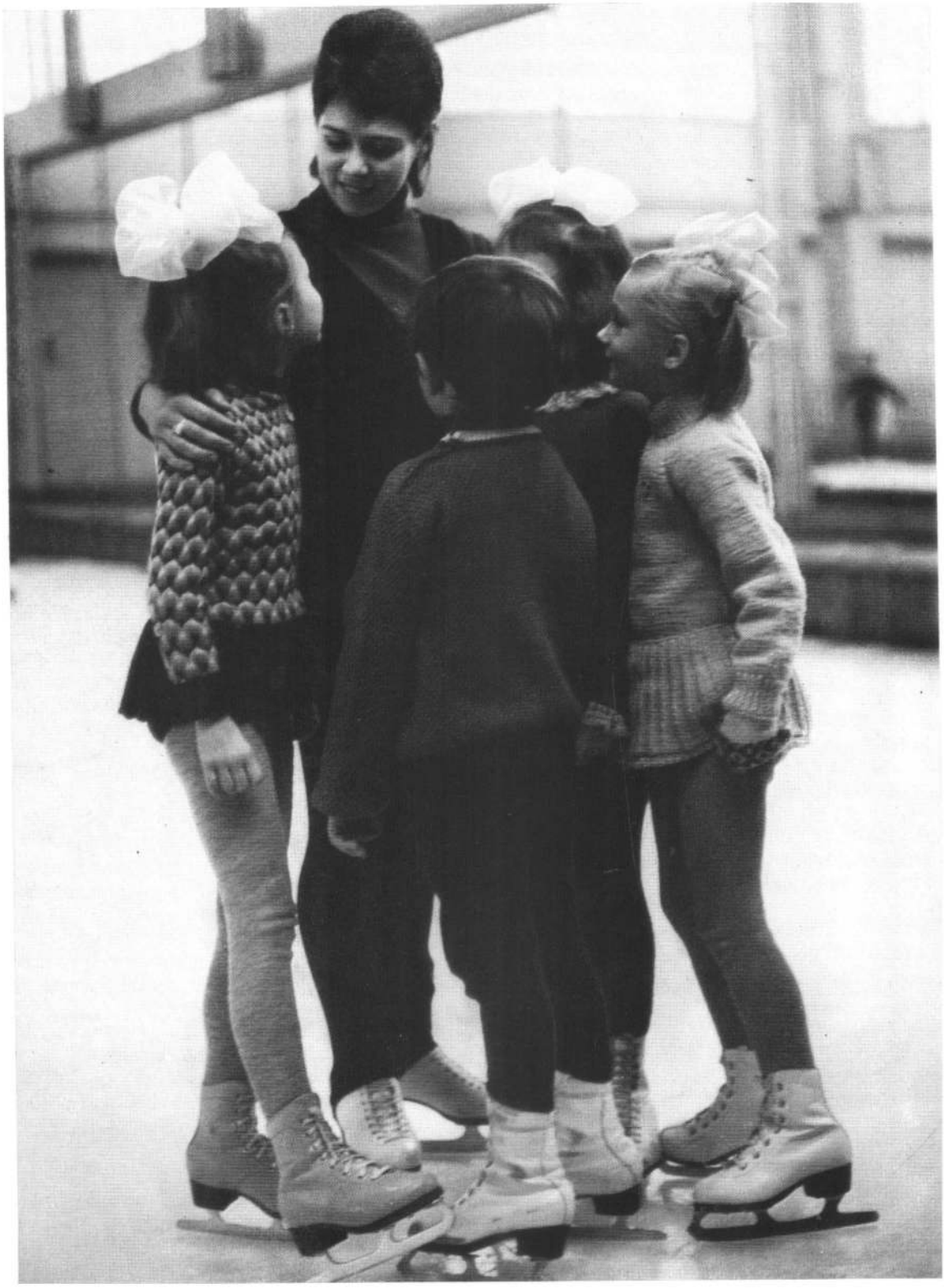
It was here in Khortitsa that Yashchenko set his first record, jumping 2 metres 3 at the age of 15! But less than three years later he won the high jump in the USSR-USA juniors match, held in the University of Virginia stadium in Richmond, with a new world record leap of 2 metres 33 centimetres. The French newspaper *L'Équipe* described his performance as "one of the most unexpected feats in the history of athletics". All the same, however unexpected, this jump was no fluke as Yashchenko resoundingly demonstrated in March 1978 at the world indoor championships in Milan with a leap of 2 metres 35.

We can say without risk that the Moscow Olympics will add the names of new young champions to the scroll of Olympic honour who came up through our children's sports schools and clubs.

Thanks to the enormous amount of solicitous and sensible work done by the Communist Party of the USSR and the Soviet government sport in the USSR has become something the nation can take true pride in. Sporting prowess is being brought to the people on a truely mass scale. This wide-scale foundation and high standards of skill are ensured by the smooth running and integral nature of the Soviet system of physical education, whose primary aim is the comprehensive and harmonic development of each individual's personality and of the Soviet people as an entity.

The youth of the Soviet Union have at their disposal truely unlimited opportunities for their all-round physical, cultural and moral education.

Our socialist nation is unstinting and loving in its attention to the needs of our boys and girls."It is our wish that our people retain throughout their entire lives their enthusiasm, liveliness of mind and youthful energy," stated Leonid Brezhnev in his speech at the 25th Congress of the CPSU. A childhood full of fun and happiness is ensured for all the younger generation in the Soviet Union, and the guarantee of this policy can be seen in our nation's splendid motto: "Everything in the name of man, everything for the benefit of man!"



Irina Rodnina, many times European and world pair skating champion

Anatoly Tarasov, one of the founding fathers of Soviet ice hockey

Alexander Medved, the world's only wrestler who won golds at three Olympic Games (1964, 1968 and 1972)

Alexander Ragulin, one of the outstanding → defenders in ice hockey history

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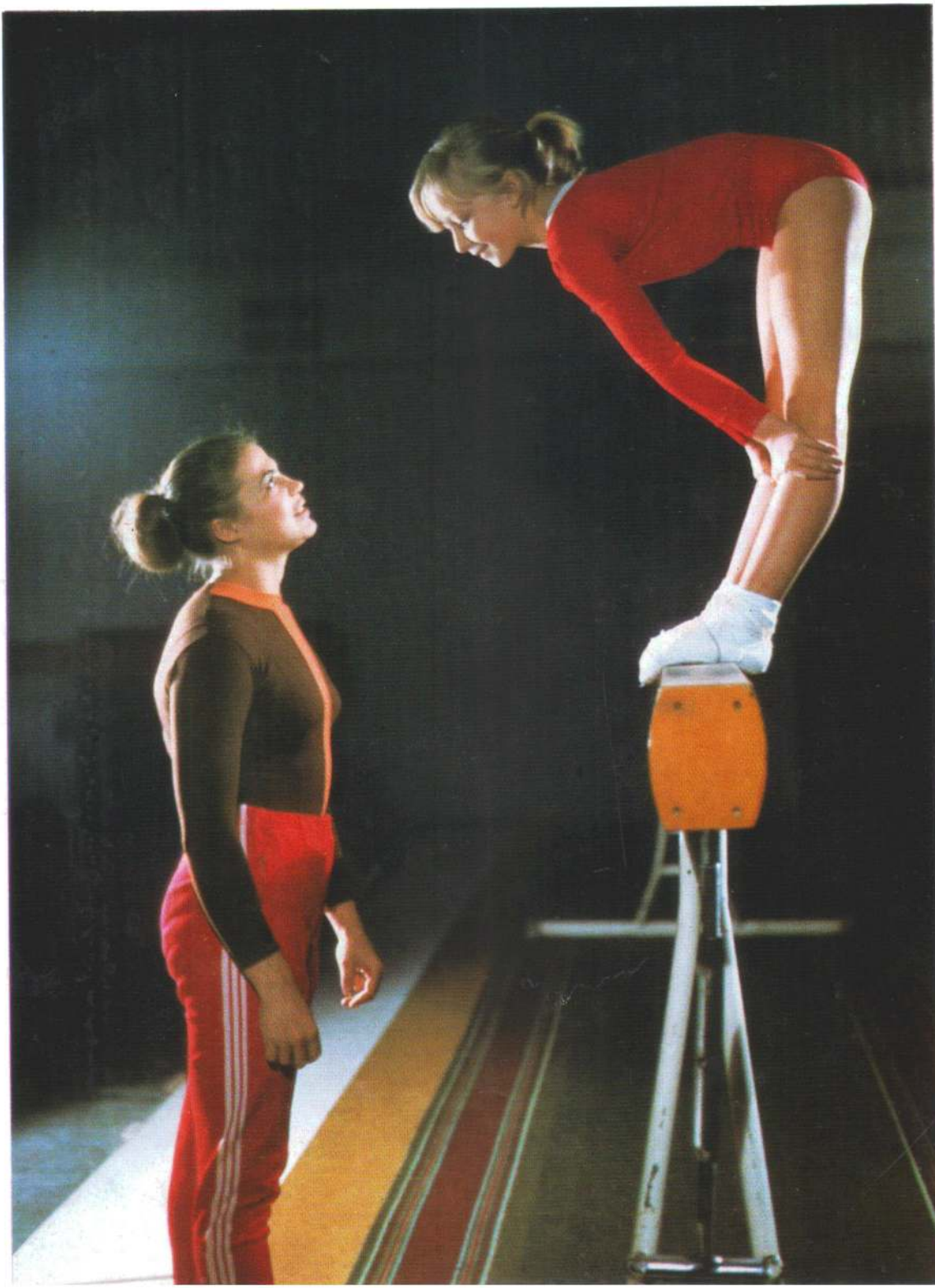
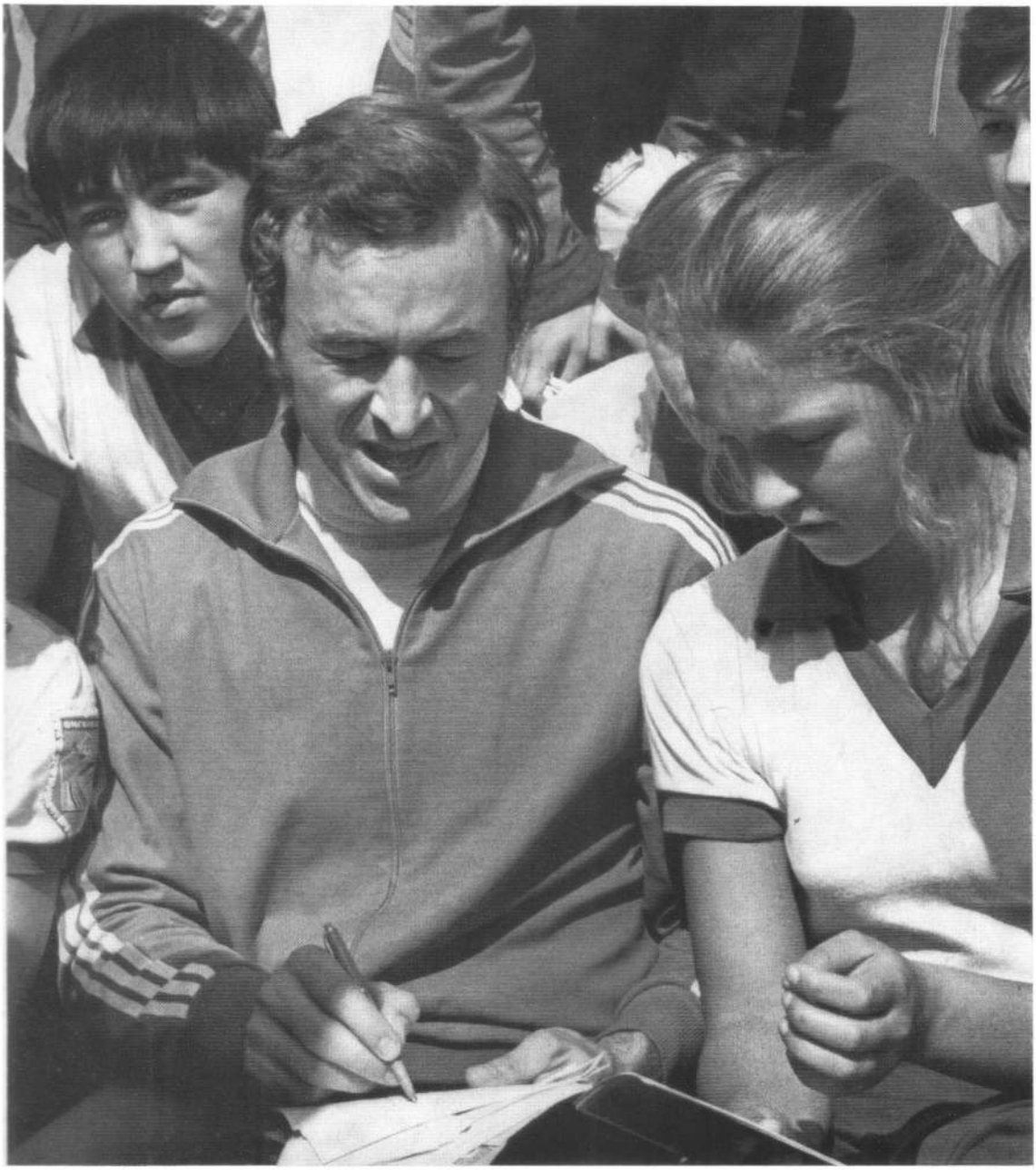


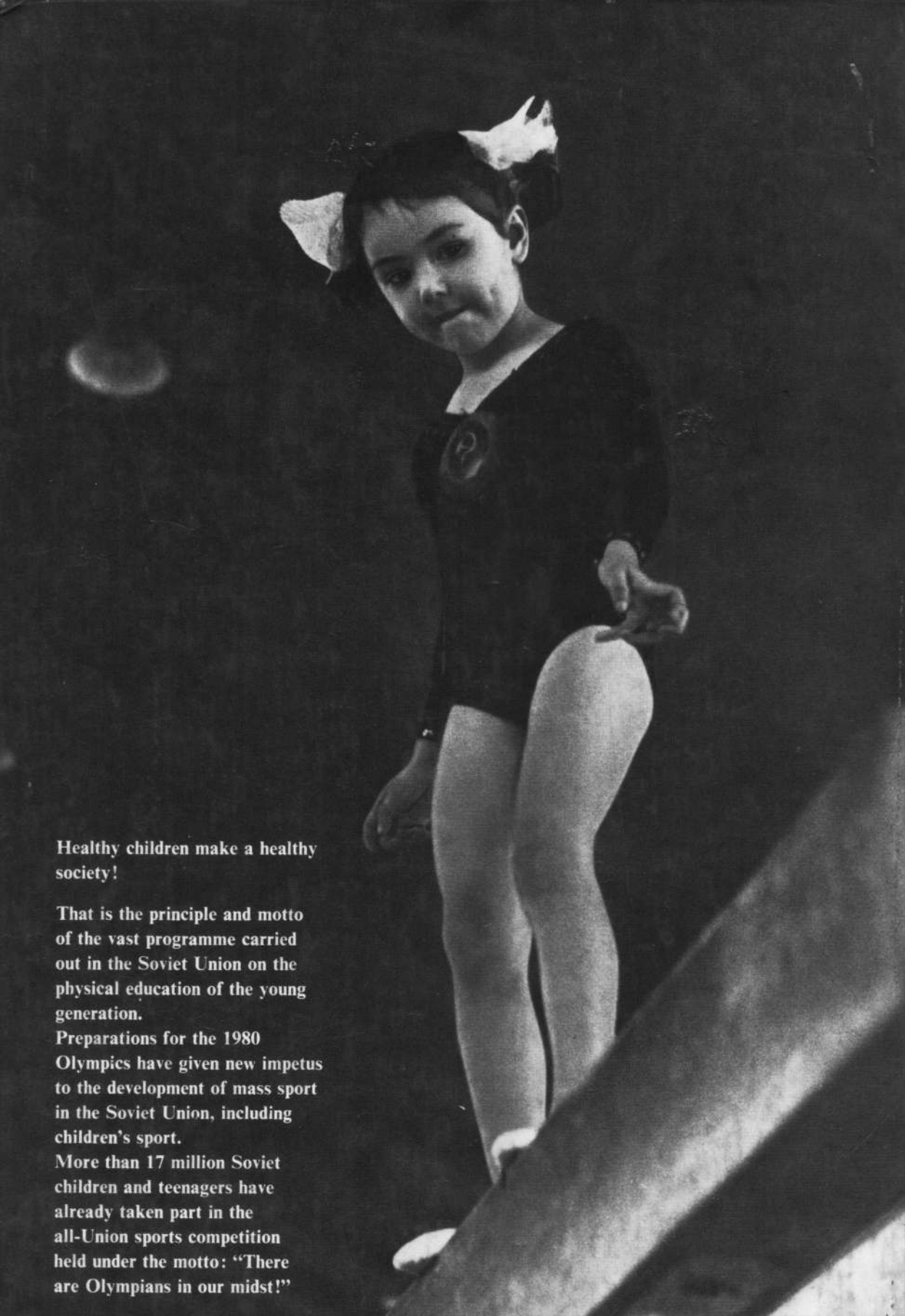
— Lyudmila Turishcheva has carved a niche for herself in the history of gymnastics

Valery Borzov, winner of the 100 and 200 meters at the 1972 Olympics



Lev Yashin, a legend in world soccer

Nikolai Andrianov had no equals in gymnastics at the 1976 Olympics



Healthy children make a healthy society!

That is the principle and motto of the vast programme carried out in the Soviet Union on the physical education of the young generation.
Preparations for the 1980 Olympics have given new impetus to the development of mass sport in the Soviet Union, including children's sport.
More than 17 million Soviet children and teenagers have already taken part in the all-Union sports competition held under the motto: "There are Olympians in our midst!"